



Oifig an Príomhoifigeach  
Eagraíocht Cúram Sláinte Pobail Lár Tire,  
An Lú, An Mhí

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte,  
Oifig Cheantair, Bóthar Ardáin,  
An Tulach Mhór, Co. Uíbh Fhailí.

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17<sup>th</sup> February, 2022

Mr Brian Stanley, T.D.,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2

**Re: Parliamentary Question – 7764/22**

**To ask the Minister for Health the progress that has been made to address the crisis in the school dental scheme in County Laois; and the progress to date to restart the adult dental treatment services scheme which has collapsed.**

Dear Deputy Stanley,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and I outline the position as follows.

The Public Dental Service Laois provides a school dental scheme with a class based targeted service in line with priorities set out by the National Oral Health Office (NOHO). The ability of the service to meet these priorities is based on available resources. In light of available resources, the Public Dental Service Laois targets adults and children with special needs, the schools dental programme targets only those children in sixth class national school and provides emergency care to children outside of target until aged sixteen years. Also, with reduced numbers of dental contractors within the Dental Treatment Service Scheme (DTSS), the Public Dental Service now must also provide emergency care to adult medical card holders who are unable to access treatment within the community.

The Public Dental Service in Co Laois currently employs five General Dental Surgeons (4.4 WTEs) to provide dental care to the eligible population, one of these positions (1WTE) is currently not delivering active care as a result of personal leave of a temporary nature. This is a significant rise in the number of available dentists from last December 2021 of 1.4 WTE, 1 new WTE has been employed and 1 WTE has returned from personal leave.

This increase in workforce will, over time, have a beneficial effect on the number of children seen in Co. Laois in target classes. The number of children currently in 6th class waiting to be seen in Co Laois is 1681.

The following measures are continually being reviewed to improve the dental service in general for the eligible population; Approval of an increase in the WTE of existing HSE staff who wish to increase their contractual hours; Employment of agency staff.



With regard to the DTSS, there has been 14 DTSS contract resignations in Laois since January 2020, there are currently only 2 DTSS contractors remaining in the county, one dentist and one Clinical Dental Technician.

The HSE is aware of access issues for DTSS patients, where access to a dentist is difficult, local services assist patients who make enquires along with providing emergency dental services for eligible patients.

Discussions are taking place between the HSE, Department of Health and the Irish Dental Association to address issues within the DTSS.

I trust the above is in order and please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further queries in this regard.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Des O'Flynn', written over a light blue horizontal line.

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Des O'Flynn  
Chief Officer  
Midlands Louth Meath Community Health Organisation