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**Deputy Bernard Durkan
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

PQ 8417/22: To ask the Minister for Health the extent to which provision can be made or is being made to address the deficiencies in the orthodontic services throughout the country; the number of persons on waiting lists at present; when they will have access to the necessary treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Durkan,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for response.

The HSE Orthodontic Service is provided in Regional Orthodontic Units. Access to treatment with the HSE Orthodontic Service is limited to those children with the most severe and complex orthodontic treatment needs. Referral for orthodontic assessment is usually made in 6th Class. The Modified Index of Treatment Needs (Modified IOTN) system is used in all regions to determine if a child will be accepted for treatment. There are a number of categories within the Modified IOTN system, and these are used to prioritise care, children whose treatment need is assessed as being in Grade 4 or Grade 5 of the Index are offered treatment with the HSE.

The KPI data for the number of patients waiting for Orthodontic Treatment at year end 2021 by Regional Orthodontic Unit is detailed in Appendix 1.

Patients and their parents face difficulties in accessing orthodontic treatment with the HSE. These difficulties are expressed through the very high numbers waiting for assessment, and in both the numbers waiting for treatment and the length of time waiting for treatment. The predominant causative factor is lack of treatment capacity in the service.

In 2015 the Department of Health approved a Treatment Waiting List Initiative, with an allocation of €1million per annum, to target patients who were waiting over 4 years for treatment. In summary, between 2016-2020, this initiative placed 1,996 patients in treatment with service providers.

The National Oral Health Office in conjunction with HBS concluded a successor procurement arrangement with private service providers for the period 2021-2024 for the provision of treatment of patients assessed as Grade 4, waiting in excess of 4 years. Under the successor arrangement 1048 patients have so far transferred to private service providers. These cohort of patients include 690 patients had been placed in treatment with external service providers in late 2021, with a further 358 patients allocated to external service providers so far in 2022.

Additional National Initiatives underway to address Orthodontic waiting lists include:

- Recruitment of additional Consultant Orthodontist and Specialist Orthodontists
- Proposed recruitment and deployment of Orthodontic Therapists.
- Prioritisation of care: All orthodontic services prioritise the provision of care for those patients identified as having the greatest needs and the highest risk of developing dental disease.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but if you require further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Green', is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Joseph Green
AND, National Oral Health Lead - Operations

Appendix 1: KPI Data Orthodontic Treatment Waiting List Q4 2021

Table1: No. of orthodontic patients (grade 4) waiting to commence treatment following assessment

Regional Orthodontic Unit	Wait band						Total number of patients
	1-6 mths	7-13 mths	13-24 mths	25-36 mths	37-48 mths	Over 48 mths	
Former East Coast (Loughlinstown)*	12	2	98	344	94	45	
Former South West (St James's)*	40	22	53	271	136	129	
Midlands	67	33	53	157	141	360	
DNE	1	9	57	116	83	80	
South	127	72	255	582	326	289	
South East	100	67	80	166	168	441	
Mid Western	52	27	47	123	104	90	
North West*	32	29	58	50	17	32	
Western	132	5	168	300	219	0	
	563	266	869	2109	1288	1466	6561

*Returns for these Orthodontic Units are at Q3 2021

Table 2: No. of orthodontic patients (grade 5) waiting to commence treatment following assessment

Regional Orthodontic Unit	1-6 mths	7-13 mths	13-24 mths	25-36 mths	37-48 mths	Over 48 mths	Total number of patients
Former East Coast (Loughlinstown)*	60	6	156	139	129	56	
Former South West (St James's)*	86	47	114	254	126	113	
Midlands	146	28	87	56	49	29	
DNE	8	26	114	195	208	183	
South	160	73	190	639	278	71	
South East	146	100	105	261	266	493	
Mid Western	89	44	53	142	146	93	
North West*	119	59	60	81			
Western	160	40	189	199	82	0	
	974	423	1068	1966	1284	1038	6753

*Returns for these Orthodontic Units are at Q3 2021