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**Deputy Sean Sherlock
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

PQ 54171/22: To ask the Minister for Health for Health the number of children awaiting dental treatment in primary school settings by CHO and LHO, in tabular form.

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

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.

HSE Dental Services are provided through 17 Dental Areas, all of which continue to provide routine services. The dental service prioritises treatment for people with special care needs, those who are medically compromised and provides emergency care for all eligible patients.

These services are delivered with a strong preventive ethos in order to minimise the incidence of dental disease in vulnerable populations. In particular this preventive approach involves the delivery of personalised oral health promotion for children and people with special care needs. Children are seen at ages that correspond with dental developmental milestones to identify opportunities for timely preventive interventions such as fissure sealants and the need for restorative treatment, as well as monitoring the eruption of the permanent dentition including possible orthodontic anomalies requiring referral for HSE orthodontic assessment.

Since the emergence of Covid-19, there has been a significant increase in delays in accessing routine treatment for those in target classes. This has resulted in backlogs emerging in the targeted schools programme. The scale of disruption to services nationally in 2020 meant that attendance for dental examinations by children was reduced to 36.5% of 2019 activity, while in 2021 the comparable attendance was 54.5% of 2019 activity.

Throughout the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, including in 2022, the HSE responded to a number of emerging problems, including testing capacity, contact tracing and the implementation of updated infection prevention and control guidance. Each of these has involved the HSE Dental Service, with extensive redeployment for testing and contact tracing, as well as for the mass vaccination programme. In some locations, access to clinical facilities was reduced due to repurposing for pandemic-related activities. The cyberattack on the HSE system in summer 2021 also had significant impacts on Dental Services.

While most oral health staff have now returned to core duties enabling the safe resumption of services, Covid-19 continues to impact on service provision for patients and staff.

As part of targeting of resources, each dental service maintains a commitment to urgent/emergency treatment for the relief of pain, infection, and the sequelae of trauma. All children in targeted classes are offered dental examination, with individual care plans based on each child's needs. For routine and preventive services, patient groups are prioritised with children and adults with special care needs given the highest priority, followed by children in 6th class. Where service deficits are identified locally, clinical teams can be redirected to address those needs.

The extent of the backlog in targeted services and delays in providing preventive interventions and treatment for patients are concerns for the HSE, with services working to reduce the backlog in treatment appointments. Delays in assessments may reduce opportunities for preventive measures as disease is not identified early. Levels of scheduled examinations improved to 65% in early 2022, but significant backlogs in treatment remain.

I wish to advise that the system does not hold data in the manner requested. Appendix 1 details KPI data for the Dental Service (2019-2021 and to date in 2022) for related reference. The reported metric is the number of new oral health patients in target groups attending for scheduled assessment.

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

Yours Sincerely,



Joseph Green
AND, National Oral Health Lead - Operations



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Appendix 1: HSE Dental Service KPI Data 2019 – to date 2022

Table 1: a) No. of new Oral Health patients in target groups (1st/2nd, 4th and 6th class) attending for scheduled assessment

CHO	LHO	Q4 2019	Q4 2020	Q4 2021	October 2022
National Total		151,392	55,324	82,494	83,171
CHO 1	Total	19,266	9,129	13,800	11,651
CHO 1	Cavan Monaghan	5,116	3,571	3,135	3,447
CHO 1	Donegal	8,321	2,659	5,286	6,244
CHO 1	Sligo Leitrim	5,829	2,899	5,379	1,960
CHO 2	Total	12,145	2,904	6,156	5,705
CHO 2	Galway	4,317	531	1,486	720
CHO 2	Mayo	3,690	1,264	2,057	1,594
CHO 2	Roscommon	4,138	1,109	2,613	3,391
CHO 3	Total	11,632	3,385	4,153	5,118
CHO 3	Clare	4,148	1,481	1,307	1,526
CHO 3	Limerick	2,544	963	1,283	1,184
CHO 3	North Tipperary East Limerick	4,940	941	1,563	2,408
CHO 4	Total	20,641	8,086	8,552	12,897
CHO 4	Kerry	3,419	1,277	1,188	2,014
CHO 4	North Cork	4,105	1,710	1,494	2,685
CHO 4	North Lee	5,175	2,027	2,791	3,964
CHO 4	South Lee	6,369	2,415	2,233	3,183
CHO 4	West Cork	1,573	657	846	1,051

CHO 5	Total	18,638	6,621	11,973	10,687
CHO 5	Carlow Kilkenny	4,992	1,690	3,418	2,687
CHO 5	South Tipperary	6,239	2,485	3,737	3,556
CHO 5	Waterford	3,919	1,608	2,972	2,466
CHO 5	Wexford	3,488	838	1,846	1,978
CHO 6	Total	8,143	4,054	6,743	4,969
CHO 6	Dun Laoghaire/ Dublin South East/Wicklow	8,143	4,054	6,743	4,969
CHO 7	Total	25,180	9,534	12,059	12,503
CHO 7	Dublin South City	3,175	1,627	2,363	2,805
CHO 7	Dublin South West	5,242	2,136	2,860	2,422
CHO 7	Dublin West	5,420	2,014	3,561	3,666
CHO 7	Kildare West Wicklow	11,343	3,757	3,275	3,610
CHO 8	Total	17,842	3,829	6,124	7,386
CHO 8	Laois Offaly	3,154	720	2,188	1,649
CHO 8	Longford Westmeath	4,317	875	2,633	1,901
CHO 8	Louth	5,547	1,100	709	1,539
CHO 8	Meath	4,824	1,134	594	2,297
CHO 9	Total	17,905	7,782	12,999	12,255
CHO 9	Dublin North	7,419	2,456	2,828	3,513
CHO 9	Dublin North Central	2,676	2,003	2,561	2,336
CHO 9	Dublin North West	7,810	3,323	7,610	6,406