



Oifig Náisiúnta Sláinte Béal,
31-33 Sráid Caitriona, Luimneach
Teil: 061 464140

E: nationaloralhealth@hse.ie

National Oral Health Office
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick
Tel: 061 464140

Email: nationaloralhealth@hse.ie

21 November 2022

**Deputy Paul Donnelly
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

PQ 55333/22: To ask the Minister for Health if the screening of teeth for the 2022/2023 second and fourth class students has commenced; and if not, when this will take place.

Dear Deputy Donnelly,

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.

Dental Services for primary school going children are provided in line with the 1970 Health Act, subsequent Acts and regulation. Services are organised and delivered by the HSE's Dental Service in line with Department of Health policy. Access to emergency treatment for the relief of pain and infection is through local dental clinics. Routine dental services for primary school going children are delivered through a targeted approach with a strong emphasis on the prevention of oral disease. Referral for treatment in secondary care settings are also made from the HSE Dental Service.

The 1994 Dental Health Action Plan states that 'Children in specific classes, usually 2nd, 4th and 6th classes are targeted for preventative measure under the school based approach'. Children in the targeted age groups are typically seen in 1st/2nd Class (7-8 year olds) and 6th Class (11-13 year olds), with some 4th Class (10 year olds) children being seen in some parts of the country.

The KPI data for the number of new oral health patients in target group 6-8 years of age /1st or 2nd class attending for scheduled assessment as at October 2022 is detailed in Appendix 1 and is available by CHO and Dental Area.

There is deficit in capacity required for the provision of routine dental services to children in 4th class, with Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) currently not providing dental screening services to this target class. Routine Dental Services for children in 4th class will be re-examined as resources and capacity permit.

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.

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. 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.

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

Appendix 1: KPI Data - No. of new oral health patients in target group 6-8 years of age /1st or 2nd class attending for scheduled assessment as at October 2022

National Total			13,266.0
CHO 1	Total		1,172.0
CHO 1	Cavan Monaghan	None	0.0
CHO 1	Donegal	None	937.0
CHO 1	Sligo Leitrim	None	235.0
CHO 2	Total		784.0
CHO 2	Galway	None	118.0
CHO 2	Mayo	None	33.0
CHO 2	Roscommon	None	633.0
CHO 3	Total		2,517.0
CHO 3	Clare	None	743.0
CHO 3	Limerick	None	494.0
CHO 3	North Tipperary East Limerick	None	1,280.0
CHO 4	Total		169.0
CHO 4	Kerry	None	169.0
CHO 5	Total		2,960.0
CHO 5	Carlow Kilkenny	None	823.0
CHO 5	South Tipperary	None	863.0
CHO 5	Waterford	None	629.0
CHO 5	Wexford	None	645.0
CHO 6	Total		4.0
CHO 6	Dun Laoghaire	None	4.0
CHO 7	Total		2,249.0
CHO 7	Dublin South City	None	712.0
CHO 7	Dublin South West	None	711.0
CHO 7	Dublin West	None	728.0
CHO 7	Kildare West Wicklow	None	98.0
CHO 8	Total		232.0
CHO 8	Laois Offaly	None	10.0
CHO 8	Longford Westmeath	None	201.0
CHO 8	Louth	None	4.0
CHO 8	Meath	None	17.0
CHO 9	Total		3,179.0
CHO 9	Dublin North	None	19.0
CHO 9	Dublin North Central	None	819.0
CHO 9	Dublin North West	None	2,341.0