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**Deputy Colm Burke
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

PQ Number 18372/23: To ask the Minister for Health what action his Department is taking to address the current waiting list for screening and treatment in orthodontic services in the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Burke,

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 Orthodontic Service

Orthodontic treatment waiting lists are collated and reported according to HSE eligibility criteria Modified IOTN, Grade 4 or Grade 5.

The HSE Orthodontic Service is provided in Regional Orthodontic Departments. 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.

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 2,768 patients have so far transferred to private service providers.

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 'Nader Farvardin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nader Farvardin,
Interim AND, National Oral Health Lead - Operations