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20th January, 2023

Mr. Michael Healy Rae, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref: 1983/23

"To ask the Minister for Health if dentists in County Kerry are taking on patients with medical cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter."

Dear Minister Healy-Rae,

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

The Primary Care Dental Service provides dental treatment, including dentures to medical card holders, these are treated by private dental practitioners contracted to the Health Services Executive under the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS).

Currently there are particular issues with the operation of DTSS. This issue is a nationwide problem and is not unique to Kerry. A significant number of private general dental surgeons have resigned from the scheme, and many others who are still participating in the Scheme have restricted access to existing patients only and are not taking on any new patients.

Unfortunately at present, it appears that there are no dentists taking on new medical card holders in Kerry. In response to this the public HSE Dental Service in Co. Kerry has set up an emergency dental service to provide emergency dental care to medical card holders who cannot access a dental appointment and this service can be accessed by calling the HSE Dental Clinic in Tralee, (066) 7104924 and selecting option 1 to be put through to a dedicated helpline. The focus of HSE Dental Services is to treat children (School Screening Programme) and adults and children with special needs, however this is the only option we could operate to provide an interim solution in this regard.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Priscilla Lynch
Head of Service - Primary Care,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare