



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

E: [nationaloralhealth@hse.ie](mailto:nationaloralhealth@hse.ie)

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

Email: [nationaloralhealth@hse.ie](mailto:nationaloralhealth@hse.ie)

**01 February 2023**

**Deputy Michael Lowry  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2**

**PQ 63543/22: To ask the Minister for Health the number of dental practices in County Tipperary which have ceased providing medical card services to persons with disabilities in the past five years; the medical card dental services that are currently available to adult persons with disabilities; the provision that is in place for those whose local dentist withdraws from the provision of medical card services in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Lowry,

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 provides care to children and adults with Special Needs in line with eligibility for services under the Health Acts. Services are provided by the HSE Dental Services for children aged up to and including 15 years, as well as some adults with disabilities, while adults with medical cards can also access services through the Dental Treatment Services Scheme.

People with special needs requiring special care dentistry are those with a condition, disability or activity restriction that directly or indirectly affects their oral health and is impacted by the personal and/or the environmental context of the individual.

Adults with disabilities are prioritised to access HSE dental services in line with the above and also on the specific consideration of the degree of their disability and its impact on their oral health. These patients are identified as eligible for HSE dental services as follows:

- Children as they progress through the schools service – Special oral health needs may be identified
- Referral into the HSE by General Dental Practitioner or General Medical Practitioner
- Screening residential care facilities by Dental teams
- Direct contact by patient/parent /care giver

Special Care patients are given an oral health examination, they have their treatment provided possibly using additional adjuncts where necessary, if available. They are assigned a risk category and are recalled at risk appropriate intervals following instruction on oral care and oral health promotion advice. Adjuncts to care include Relative Analgesia, IV sedation and Dental General Anaesthetic. Onward referral to Specialist in Special Care is available in some areas.

Adult medical card holders have access to dental services under the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) through care provided by private dentists that hold DTSS contracts with the HSE. If someone is over 16 years and has a current medical card then that person is entitled to free dental treatment from any of the Dentists on the DTSS list. This list is available at local HSE Dental clinics and online at HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) Online Services.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the data is not available as requested. The table below details the number of DTSS contractors in Local Health Offices North Tipperary/East Limerick and South Tipperary. The difference in the number of contractors between each year include resignations/retirements and new entrants to the scheme.

<b>Year</b>	<b>LHO 22 North Tipp/East Limerick</b>	<b>LHO 31 South Tipperary</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2022</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>

In any one calendar year entitlement includes:

- A Dental examination including any necessary x rays
- Scale and polish (cleaning)
- Two restorations (fillings) as clinically necessary
- Extractions (as many as necessary)
- Root canal treatment (restricted to front teeth only)
- Denture repairs
- Dentures (need prior approval)

Patients who are deemed Exceptional or High Risk have an expanded range of treatments available to them. Access to these treatments requires approval by the HSE of an application from the patient's dentist.

This includes (for Exceptional /High Risk):

- Prolonged Periodontal Treatment
- Second scale and polish (cleaning) after 6 months in a calendar year
- More than two restorations (fillings) in a calendar year

If a patient has difficulty accessing such treatment through the DTSS he/she should contact their local HSE dental service.

On 1st May 2022 a number of changes and fee adjustments were introduced in the DTSS to support the scheme. These included an expansion in the definition of the Examination item with a corresponding fee increase and reintroduction of Scale and Polish. There were also significant increases in fees for many treatment items including restorations, routine extractions and dentures.

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

Yours Sincerely,



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**Joseph Green**  
**AND, National Oral Health Lead - Operations**