

18th January 2023

Ms. Verona Murphy TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 63653/22

To ask the Minister for Health the number of dental practices in County Wexford which have ceased providing medical card services to persons with disabilities in the past 36 months; the medical card dental services currently available to adult persons with disabilities; the provision in place for those whose local dentist withdraws from the provision of medical card services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

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To ask the Minister for Health the number of dental practices in County Wexford which have ceased providing medical card services in the past 36 months; the medical card dental services currently available to medical card users; the provision in place for those whose local dentist withdraws from the provision of medical card services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Murphy,

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

I have reviewed the matter and the following outlines the current position.

Persons with medical card eligibility and other eligible persons can access dental treatment through the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS). All medical card holders are entitled to specific dental treatments: dental examination, two fillings in each calendar year, extractions as necessary.

An updated list of participating dentists in the DTSS Scheme in Wexford can be obtained by contacting the Primary Care Unit in Lacken, Kilkenny on 056 7784234 who will provide assistance in this regard.

Currently the number of dentists that hold contracts for the DTSS in Co. Wexford is 14 within 9 practices.

Over the past 36 months the number of dentists that have withdrawn from the DTSS Scheme in Wexford is 29, the relevant Principal Dental Surgeon and the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) are advised of all exits.

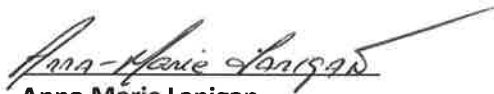
Unfortunately there is no pathway for the HSE to ensure Dentists accept medical cardholders as patients. The HSE issues the contracts and requests yearly registration documentation but the HSE cannot direct a dentist to offer an appointment to a medical card patient. It is a matter for the individual dentist to decide the clinical priority of patients reviewed within their surgeries i.e. existing or new patients.

A recent Circular (Circular No. 13/22) was issued to Dentists informing them of changes and fee adjustments/increases effective from 1st May 2022 which may increase the numbers of dentists applying for a DTSS contract.

There are particular issues with the HSE Dental Service for adults i.e. DTSS. This is a nationwide problem and not unique to Co. Wexford. A number of private general dental practitioners (GDP) have resigned from the scheme and many general dental practitioners still operating the scheme have restricted access and may only be seeing existing patients. SECH understands that matter is currently being raised and considered by the Department of Health and the HSE at a national level.

I trust this information is of assistance to you. Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Anna Marie Lanigan
Head of Service-Primary Care/Assistant National Director
South East Community Healthcare