



**CÚRAM SLÁINTE POBAIL
COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE**

CABHÁN DÚN NA NGALL LIATROIM MUINEACHÁN SLIGEACH
CAVAN DONEGAL LEITRIM MONAGHAN SLIGO

Ceann Seirbhíse, Cúraim Príomhúil
Cúram Sláinte Pobail Cabhán Dún na nGall
Liatroim Muineachán, Sligeach
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25th July, 2023

Deputy Pauline Tully TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

Re: PQ –35190/23: To ask the Minister for Health the number of children and adults on the dental appointment waiting list in counties Cavan and Monaghan; the average waiting times for appointments in each county; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Tully,

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.

I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position for Community Healthcare Cavan Donegal Leitrim Monaghan Sligo.

The Cavan Monaghan HSE Dental Service for children operates as a targeted, school-linked service, whereby children in specific primary school classes are targeted for an oral health assessment and for primary care treatment arising there from. The provision of this service is a statutory requirement for the HSE.

As is the case nationally the service does not operate a waiting list system but offers oral health assessments to children in their class cohorts. In an average school year cohort there are over 2000 children in Cavan Monaghan. A previous national service goal would have been to offer oral health assessments to three class cohorts in each calendar year. Children are seen at ages that correspond with dental developmental milestones to identify opportunities for timely preventive interventions such as fissure sealants and the need for restorative treatment, as well as monitoring the eruption of the permanent dentition including possible orthodontic anomalies requiring referral for HSE orthodontic assessment.

The Covid-19 Pandemic severely impacted the Dental Service with routine dental services being suspended on the advice of the National Oral Health Office (NOHO), and access to dental services nationally was restricted to emergency treatment under the terms of Statutory Instrument 121/2020 for a time. This resulted in the cancellation of hundreds of routine dental appointments and many dental staff were redeployed during the height of the pandemic. Furthermore the necessary Covid-19 mitigating factors resulted in reduced capacity in Dental Clinics. The Cavan Monaghan Service has also operated with a shortfall of 2/3 WTE dentists since 2020, due to maternity leave and staff retirements. This has led to an inevitable delay in progress through target classes. The HSE is actively trying to recruit Dental Surgeons but there is a severe shortage of available candidates with many vacancies existing nationally.



Therefore since 2020 the Cavan Monaghan service like many areas nationally has only managed to target one class cohort namely 6th class. In North Monaghan we are completing 6th class 2021/22 (**80 remaining**) and elsewhere working through the 6th class 2022/23, (**1,380 remaining**).

A key national Oral Health KPI is 'the percentage of new oral health patients who commenced treatment within 3 months of a scheduled assessment' the service has scored 100% in 4 of the 6 months to date of 2023.

In addition to the service for school children the dental service prioritises treatment for people with special care needs, those who are medically compromised and provides emergency care for all eligible patients. These services are delivered with a strong preventive ethos in order to minimise the incidence of dental disease in vulnerable populations. In particular this preventive approach involves the delivery of personalised oral health promotion for children and people with special care needs. Such patients are referred to the service by other health care professionals, through screening of special schools and facilities and also by self-referral. Many of these patients stay within the service and receive ongoing oral health care.

The dental service also provides oral health care where indicated through a limited dental general anaesthetic service. A dental list is provided in Cavan General Hospital one morning per week for young children and special care patients. On average three patients can be facilitated on each list. There are three waiting lists associated with the dental general anaesthetic service. (See table below).

Dental General Anaesthetic Waiting Lists July 2023	
Paediatric Waiting List	90
Paediatric Special Care Waiting List	42
Adult Special Care Waiting List	26

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

Yours sincerely

Josephine Colling (Acting Head of Service)
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