



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

E: nationaloralhealth@hse.ie

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

Email: nationaloralhealth@hse.ie

10 August 2023

Deputy Violet Anne Wynne
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ 36089/23: To ask the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 736 of 20 June 2023, if he will provide an update with respect to HSE safety net service and the need for the rollout of an awareness campaign to make people aware as many people are going without care; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Wynne,

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.

Dental Treatment is made available to medical card holders over the age of 16 through the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS). Dentists who hold a contract with the Scheme provide a range of treatments which are funded by the HSE. Patients are not required to register with a particular DTSS contractor and may attend any of the contracted dentists; the list is available at local HSE Dental clinics and online at HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) Online Services.

The HSE acknowledges the challenges associated with DTSS currently and the reduced number of dentists participating in same. Where access to a dentist is difficult, local services assist patients who make enquires and make lists of DTSS contractors available to medical card holders. In exceptional circumstances the HSE directly assists patients to access emergency dental treatment by contacting private contractors or arranging treatment through HSE employed dentists.

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. On foot of these measures, the number of patients accessing care each month and the numbers of treatments being provided under the DTSS have increased since May 2022.

To help address access issues with the Dental Treatment Services Scheme, an unprecedented additional allocation of €15m was made in Budget 2023.

Of this allocation, €5m is being invested on a one-off basis in 2023 to support the HSE to provide care to its eligible child and adult populations, including addressing backlogs in the targeted primary school class programme and improving access to emergency treatment for medical card holders. A number of extra dental sessions have been conducted in HSE clinics via this funding so far with an expectation of an increase in activity in the second half of this year.

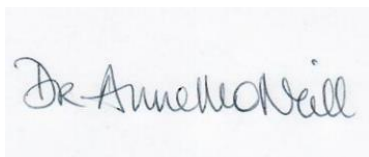
The HSE's 2023 National Service Plan aims to continue to develop services and implement waiting list initiatives across a range of dental and orthodontic services and maximise activity across these services to manage waiting lists and waiting times. Oral healthcare services for adults are included in the reorientation of services described in Smile Agus Sláinte (National Oral Health Policy). The initiation of the implementation of the policy is included in priorities and funding from budget 2023.

The HSE actively monitors the number of contractors and it is hoped that through the implementation of the National Oral Health Policy, more practitioners will join the scheme, with a better distribution of contractors around the country.

So far this year 131,626 additional treatments have been provided under the Dental Treatment Services Schemes, with over 24,500 extra unique patients treated when compared to the same time period last year (July figures).

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 rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dr Anne M O'Neill".

**Dr Anne M O'Neill,
HSE AND, National Oral Health Lead - Operations**