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6 April 2023

Deputy Alan Farrell  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**PQ Number 14401/23: To ask the Minister for Health the number of children with medical cards who availed of dentistry appointments in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022; and if he will make a statement on the matter**

Dear Deputy Farrell,

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 reply.

The HSE Dental Services are provided through 17 Dental Areas, all of which continue to provide routine services. 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.

All children under the age of 16 are eligible for public dental services and therefore the service does not capture data on their medical card status.

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 HSE Dental Service targets children in key school years (2nd, 4th and 6th classes), offering them dental examinations, preventive care and restorative treatments for conditions noted. The ability to offer services to each of the school years has been limited due to availability of dental staff. Since the emergence of Covid-19, there has been a significant increase in delays in accessing routine treatment for those in target classes. This has resulted in backlogs emerging in the targeted schools programme.

As part of targeting of resources, each dental service maintains a commitment to urgent/emergency treatment for the relief of pain, infection, and the sequelae of trauma. Children in targeted classes are offered dental examination, with individual care plans based on each child's needs. For routine and preventive services, patient groups are prioritised with children and adults with special care needs given the highest priority, followed by children in 6th class. Where service deficits are identified locally, clinical teams can be redirected to address those needs.

The extent of the backlog in targeted services and delays in providing preventive interventions and treatment for patients are concerns for the HSE, with services working to reduce the backlog in treatment appointments. Delays in assessments may reduce opportunities for preventive measures as disease is not identified early. Levels of scheduled examinations improved to 65% of 2019 figures in 2022, but significant backlogs in treatment remain.

Appendix 1 details KPI data for the Dental Service by Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) and Local Health Office (LHO) end 2019 to end 2022. The reported metric is the number of new oral health patients in target groups attending for scheduled assessment.

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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**Nader Farvardin,**  
**Interim AND, National Oral Health Lead - Operations**



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**Appendix 1: No. of new Oral Health patients in target groups (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class) attending for scheduled assessment (2018 – 2022)**

CHO	LHO	Q4 2018	Q4 2019	Q4 2020	Q4 2021	Q4 2022
<b>National Total</b>		<b>152,190</b>	<b>151,392</b>	<b>55,324</b>	<b>82,494</b>	<b>99,367</b>
<b>CHO 1</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>15,182</b>	<b>19,266</b>	<b>9,129</b>	<b>13,800</b>	<b>13,637</b>
CHO 1	Cavan Monaghan	2,836	5,116	3,571	3,135	4,250
CHO 1	Donegal	5,760	8,321	2,659	5,286	7,187
CHO 1	Sligo Leitrim	6,586	5,829	2,899	5,379	2,200
<b>CHO 2</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>12,455</b>	<b>12,145</b>	<b>2,904</b>	<b>6,156</b>	<b>7,073</b>
CHO 2	Galway	4,223	4,317	531	1,486	895
CHO 2	Mayo	4,258	3,690	1,264	2,057	2,027
CHO 2	Roscommon	3,974	4,138	1,109	2,613	4,151
<b>CHO 3</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>10,480</b>	<b>11,632</b>	<b>3,385</b>	<b>4,153</b>	<b>6,125</b>
CHO 3	Clare	2,691	4,148	1,481	1,307	1,784
CHO 3	Limerick	3,507	2,544	963	1,283	1,528

CHO 3	North Tipperary East Limerick	4,282	4,940	941	1,563	2,813
<b>CHO 4</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>22,930</b>	<b>20,641</b>	<b>8,086</b>	<b>8,552</b>	<b>15,350</b>
CHO 4	Kerry	3,999	3,419	1,277	1,188	2,344
CHO 4	North Cork	4,691	4,105	1,710	1,494	3,252
CHO 4	North Lee	5,555	5,175	2,027	2,791	4,725
CHO 4	South Lee	6,365	6,369	2,415	2,233	3,763
CHO 4	West Cork	2,320	1,573	657	846	1,266
<b>CHO 5</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>19,174</b>	<b>18,638</b>	<b>6,621</b>	<b>11,973</b>	<b>12,484</b>
CHO 5	Carlow Kilkenny	4,384	4,992	1,690	3,418	3,075
CHO 5	South Tipperary	6,185	6,239	2,485	3,737	4,259
CHO 5	Waterford	3,652	3,919	1,608	2,972	2,909
CHO 5	Wexford	4,953	3,488	838	1,846	2,241
<b>CHO 6</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>8,105</b>	<b>8,143</b>	<b>4,054</b>	<b>6,743</b>	<b>5,678</b>
CHO 6	Dun Laoghaire/ Dublin South East/Wicklow	8,105	8,143	4,054	6,743	5,678
<b>CHO 7</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>21,355</b>	<b>25,180</b>	<b>9,534</b>	<b>12,059</b>	<b>15,151</b>
CHO 7	Dublin South City	2,768	3,175	1,627	2,363	3,456
CHO 7	Dublin South West	3,957	5,242	2,136	2,860	2,812
CHO 7	Dublin West	6,596	5,420	2,014	3,561	4,446

CHO 7	Kildare West Wicklow	8,034	11,343	3,757	3,275	4,437
<b>CHO 8</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>20,963</b>	<b>17,842</b>	<b>3,829</b>	<b>6,124</b>	<b>8,581</b>
CHO 8	Laois Offaly	3,656	3,154	720	2,188	1,902
CHO 8	Longford Westmeath	4,173	4,317	875	2,633	2,212
CHO 8	Louth	5,423	5,547	1,100	709	1,812
CHO 8	Meath	7,711	4,824	1,134	594	2,655
<b>CHO 9</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>21,546</b>	<b>17,905</b>	<b>7,782</b>	<b>12,999</b>	<b>15,288</b>
CHO 9	Dublin North	8,527	7,419	2,456	2,828	4,562
CHO 9	Dublin North Central	3,958	2,676	2,003	2,561	2,845
CHO 9	Dublin North West	9,061	7,810	3,323	7,610	7,881