

4th March, 2024

Ms. Holly Cairns, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 44299/23

“To ask the Minister for Health the current waiting period for children on waiting lists for braces in County Cork; the efforts his Department is making to reduce this waiting time; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Cairns,

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.

The primary goal of the orthodontic service is to improve the appearance and function of misaligned or crooked teeth, with free orthodontic treatment being provided to children with the most severe orthodontic problems. Qualification for treatment is determined by nationally agreed eligibility guidelines based on an international grading system (IOTN). All referrals for the service are triaged and given a priority rating by the clinical team.

The HSE Orthodontic Service, based on the St. Finbarr’s Hospital campus covers Cork North Lee, Cork South Lee, West Cork and Kerry. Therefore, the volume of children waiting to be assessed and treated on the waiting lists are extremely high.

The treatment waiting lists for the HSE Orthodontic Department Cork/Kerry are as follows:

- Routine Fixed Waiting List: 6 years
- Priority Fixed Waiting List: 5 years
- Functional Waiting List: 18 months – 4 years (depending on DOB)

Unfortunately, despite inclusion in the national waiting list initiative, Cork and Kerry has very few private providers that are available to participate in this initiative. This, coupled with a large treatment backlog from COVID 19; and historically large numbers on waiting lists means that waiting times for treatment are very long.

Waiting times can also be impacted by clinical priorities and where cases present that are more clinically urgent than those already on the waiting lists then those cases may need to be seen as a matter of priority.

The Orthodontic Service has recently employed an additional consultant orthodontist in a part time capacity which has had a positive impact on the waiting times for orthodontic assessment. The orthodontic assessment waiting lists are currently running at between 10 months – 24 months.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Priscilla Lynch', written in a cursive style.

Priscilla Lynch
Head of Service - Primary Care,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare