

29<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Donnchadh O'Laoghaire, T.D.,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Dublin 2

**PQ ref 33634/24.**

**"To ask the Minister for Health the waiting list for dentistry services in the CUH and Cork South Lee, broken down by whether they are waiting by 3, 6, 9, 12, 18 and 24 months".**

Dear Deputy Ó Laoghaire,

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 Health Service Executive (HSE) 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, assessed, assigned to the waiting list per clinical priority or discharged.

The HSE Orthodontic Service at St. Finbarr's Hospital covers, Cork North Lee, Cork South Lee, West Cork and Kerry areas. Therefore, the volume of children waiting to be assessed and treated on the waiting lists are extremely high. Unfortunately, the service is operating under challenging circumstances in terms of available resources and this is having an impact on waiting times, 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.

Orthodontic Services for named schools in North Cork are provided by Cork University Dental School and Hospital (CUDSH) on behalf of the HSE, through their post-graduate orthodontic programme, whereby post-graduate students treat a defined number of patients as part of this programme which runs every 3 years. The next CUDSH intake of post-graduate students is scheduled for October 2024. Unfortunately, the CUDSH do not have capacity within the service to appoint all those waiting orthodontic treatment in October 2024. Depending on a patient's place on the orthodontic treatment waiting list they may not commence treatment in October 2024 and therefore, will remain on the waiting list until the next intake of post-graduate students which will be scheduled for October 2027.

Please find attached orthodontic waiting list numbers broken down by the relevant wait bands, as requested, as reported in the KPI returns for Q2/2024. Please note the data is collated based on the overall number of patients waiting orthodontic assessment and treatment across all areas in Cork and Kerry.

<b>Orthodontic Assessment W/L</b>	<b>Cork North Lee, South Lee, West Cork, Kerry</b>	<b>North Cork CUDSH</b>	<b>Total CKCH</b>
Number of orthodontic patients waiting for an assessment following referral: wait band 0-6 months	888	71	959
Number of orthodontic patients waiting for an assessment following referral: wait band 7-12 months	688	0	688
Number of orthodontic patients waiting for an assessment following referral: wait band 13-24 months	226	1	227
Number of orthodontic patients waiting for an assessment following referral: wait band > 2 years	77	0	77
<b>Total number of orthodontic patients waiting for an assessment following referral:</b>	<b>1879</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>1951</b>

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.

<b>Orthodontic Treatment Waiting List</b>	<b>North Lee, South Lee, West Cork, Kerry</b>	<b>North Cork CUDSH</b>	<b>Total CKCH</b>
Number of orthodontic patients waiting to commence treatment following assessment: wait band 0-6 months	497	152	649
Number of orthodontic patients waiting to commence treatment following assessment: wait band 7-12 months	351	39	390
Number of orthodontic patients waiting to commence treatment following assessment: wait band 13-24 months	326	160	486
Number of orthodontic patients waiting to commence treatment following assessment: wait band 25-36 months	343	114	457
Number of orthodontic patients waiting to commence treatment following assessment: wait band 37-48 months	74	199	273
No of orthodontic patients waiting to commence treatment following assessment: wait band > 4 years	583	182	765
<b>Total no of orthodontic patients waiting for treatment following assessment</b>	<b>2174</b>	<b>846</b>	<b>3020</b>

The HSE Oral Surgery Service at St. Mary's Primary Care Centre covers, Cork City, Cork County, Kerry and surrounding counties. The volume of patients waiting for oral surgery consultation and treatment on the waiting lists are extremely high. Unfortunately, the service is operating under challenging circumstances in terms of available resources and this is having an impact on waiting times.

The numbers of those waiting oral surgery consultation in June 2024 is approximately 1210. The service is now calling those awaiting oral surgery consultation from October 2021. There are approximately 112 patients awaiting oral surgery under general anaesthesia (GA).

As of September 2023 Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (CKCH) Oral Health Services have access to the National Oral Health Office (NOHO) minor oral surgery wait list initiative. As of July 2024, 189 patients from the HSE oral surgery waiting list have been put forward for treatment under this initiative, of which 47 patients have received treatment under General Anaesthetic.

Please note waiting times across the Oral Health Services 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.

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 read 'Priscilla Lynch', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

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

