



Oifig Náisiúnta Sláinte Béil,
Áras Phlásóg na Rós Coimpléasc Gnó na hOllscoile,
An Pháirc Náisiúnta Teicneolaíochta, Caladh an Treoigh, Luimneach
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19 July 2024

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ 26914/24: To ask the Minister for Health if a child under 16 years with a full medical card is entitled to free dental fillings; if not, where a parent who cannot afford a private dentist can seek this care; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Boyd Barrett,

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.

Eligibility for funded dental care is specified in the Health Act 1970 with some amendments to increase the age range to 16 years. Eligibility for children is by age with all children up to age 16 being able to access the same level of care. There is no differentiation for eligibility for funded dental care for children between children with and without a medical card. Eligibility for adult services is linked to medical card status. The services currently available to children are provided through a school programme and emergency care.

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. 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. The ability to offer services to each of the school years has been limited due to availability of dental staff.

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. Where service deficits are identified locally, additional resources where available 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.



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Additional resources have been provided through the National Service Plan 2023 to support the implementation of the Government's National Oral Health Policy, Smile Agus Sláinte, which highlights the disparity of services including the development of comprehensive oral healthcare packages for roll-out to children aged from birth to seven years of age. The HSE's 2023 National Service Plan continues to support the development of 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.

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 handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dr. Anne O'Neill".

Anne O'Neill

Assistant National Director, Oral Health