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7th May 2024

Deputy Steven Matthews

Dáil Éireann

Leinster House

Kildare Street

Dublin 2

Re: PQ ref 13477/24 – *To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to significant waiting lists for orthodontic treatment in the national maxillofacial unit in St. James's Hospital; if staffing levels are at the required level in all positions in this unit; what processes are in place to attempt to reduce wait times; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Dear Deputy Matthews,

The Orthodontic Service in St James's Hospital generally covers the Cleft Service, which provides treatment for cleft lip and/or palate and other craniofacial conditions. The Orthodontic and Prosthodontic Unit acts as a tertiary referral service for orthodontics (fixed braces) and prosthodontics (implants or bridges). The Maxillofacial Service receives referrals from community orthodontists for orthognathic treatment, e.g., jaw realignment surgery. The Maxillofacial Service not only supports the orthognathic pathway but also the head and neck cancer pathway for patients diagnosed with cancer.

There are resource challenges within the Maxillofacial Service relating to consultants, dental nurses and laboratory/ dental technicians. Clinical priority is given to urgent time-sensitive head and neck cancer cases that require surgery before they potentially become inoperable. This in addition to bed and theatre capacity challenges can result in delays for patients listed for orthodontic treatment.

A business case has been submitted to the NCCP for the Head and Neck Cancer Service. If approved, this will improve access for orthodontic patients as it will increase the capacity of the Maxillofacial Service.

Yours sincerely,



Ms Aisling Collins

Interim Chief Operations Officer