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13th August 2025.

Mr. Michael Healy-Rae, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ ref 42394/25

"To ask the Minister for Health if the HSE will examine the possibility of appointing an Orthodontist (details supplied) in Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter".

Details supplied: Minister will the HSE look at having a HSE Orthodontist in Kerry. If not on a full time basis perhaps it could be allowed on a part time basis. Families have to travel from Kerry to Cork on numerous occasions and having an Orthodontist in Kerry would be of huge benefit.

Dear Minister Healy-Rae,

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 Orthodontic Service based at St. Finbarr's Hospital, Cork covers Cork North Lee, Cork South Lee, West Cork and Kerry, with all patients/service users accessing orthodontic assessment and treatment (eligible patients) within the centralised facility. This allows for effective management of patient records, waiting list management and equitable allocation of resources regardless of a patient/service users location. The Orthodontic Service aims to deliver a high quality standard of care to its patients/service users which is achievable by maintaining the service in one centralised facility in Cork. As orthodontic treatment is a specialised service that requires on-site patient management within a centralised facility, which promotes efficiency and effectiveness in the best interest of the patient.

In order to effectively manage the service in terms of both clinical and administrative resources it is more beneficial to have all staff operating in one centralised facility, thereby, maximising patient throughput. The service has been granted approval of a new consultant orthodontist post, 1 WTE which when appointed will increase patient throughput which will improve access and reduce waiting list numbers.

Please note a specialist/consultant working in isolation at satellite clinic locations is not considered best practice, as there is no facility for peer review, shared thinking/learning between colleagues, case-based discussion in particular peer support with complex cases. For that reason and due to the current staffing levels the service is not in a position to appoint a consultant orthodontist in Kerry at this time.

Unfortunately, satellite clinic locations across Kerry do not have adequate facilities to operate fully functioning orthodontic clinics as clinics are designed and operated for dental services. The Tralee clinic operated out of the dental clinic, the priority was dental services and without a full orthodontic on-site presence it was hard to achieve radiographs of high standard orthodontic quality and access to sterilisation equipment was limited. The orthodontic facility based in Cork has access to specialised orthodontic equipment and operates a robust Centralised Sterilise Services Department (CSSD) and x-ray department, however, the Tralee clinic did not have access to full orthodontic clinical equipment, in particular the sterilisation of instruments which posed a challenge in terms of Infection Prevention Control measures.

Seirbhís sláinte a thógáil a bhfuil ár bpobal bródúil aisti
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The Orthodontic Service strives to deliver a high quality standard of care to its patients/service users and in order to maintain effective and efficient service delivery in the absence of a designated Kerry based orthodontic facility and due to the current staffing levels it is recommended that the service remains a centralised service based at St. Finbarr's Hospital, Cork.

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

Yours sincerely,

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