



27th June 2025

Deputy Ged Nash
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 31935/25 - To ask the Minister for Health if she will give an update on waiting times for under-18s for Orthodontist services in Drogheda and Dundalk and if there are plans in place to reduce waiting times for these services in these areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter – Ged Nash

Dear Deputy Nash

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. I have examined the matter and outlined the position as follows.

At present the Orthodontic service in Louth (which serves Drogheda & Dundalk patients) has no Consultant Orthodontist or Specialist Orthodontist working in the clinic due to vacant posts. Therefore we are unable to provide an update regarding waiting times for services for under 18s in Louth. However we can provide an update on the plans currently in place to actively recruit for these posts which will help reduce waiting lists for these services once successful.

Approaches undertaken by the HSE to resolve the clinical staffing deficit are as follows:-

Consultant Orthodontist Post – WTE 1.0 (Louth Meath)

- This post has been vacant since late December 2022.
- May 23 – May 24 Advertised on an ongoing basis via HSE Website & Public Jobs.ie - No Applicants
- June 24 – Reached out to Agencies – No Applicants
- July 24 - Re-advertised via HSE Website & Public Jobs.ie and also with British Dental Journal and Belfast Telegraph– No Applicants
- July 24 Contacted relevant Universities in Northern Ireland and UK – No Applicants
- August 24 – Dec 24 Advertised via HSE Website & Public Jobs.ie– No Applicants
- Dec 24 – Advertisement stopped due to – New Consultant Contract – New Application to be submitted to Consultant Applications Advisory Committee (CAAC)
- Mar 2025 – reached out again to agencies on and off framework – No Applicants.
- Currently progressing post through CAAC to be recommence advertisements in the coming months.

In addition to the HSE's attempts to replace this vacancy, in March 2024 Community Health Organisation (CHO) 8 sought consultant orthodontic support from CHO1 and CHO9 which due to their own capacity was not available.

**Specialist Orthodontist – WTE 1.0**

- National HSE recruitment pause commenced November 2023
- WTE post vacant since Jan 2024
- Following revision of national derogation process progression for replacement of 2.0WTE progressed
- May 24 – Contacted four Agencies as per HSE Framework - No Applicants
- June 24 - Advertised via HSE Website & Public Jobs.ie and also with British Dental Journal and Belfast Telegraph and contacted University's Northern Ireland and UK - No Applicants
- June 24 - Contacted Eight more Agencies as per HSE Framework - No Applicants
- July 24 – Contacted Agency Company off HSE Framework
- Aug 24 – Campaign stopped due to Pay & Numbers Strategy (PNS). To note due to the PNS there is now only 1.0WTE as a valid vacant position which we have continued to recruit for.
- Ongoing contact with on and off HSE Framework agencies has continued since approval from May 2024.

Specialist Orthodontist – WTE 0.2

- Post vacant since March 2025
- Currently progressing through the HSE recruitment approval process.

Approaches undertaken by the HSE to provide some clinical cover are as follows:-

In March 2024, two other Community Healthcare Areas (CHO) were also contacted to ascertain if resources from these areas could be used to help the staffing challenges in Louth Orthodontic Service. Due to these areas working at full capacity; no additional resources could be sourced outside of CHO8. CHO8/Louth/Meath Integrated Health Area (IHA) is continuing to explore consultant support from neighbouring IHAs.

At stated, we are actively recruiting additional orthodontic staff to improve service capacity. We will provide updates to all patients as soon as new appointments are confirmed and scheduling can proceed.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further queries in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

Niamh Clarke
A/Head of Primary Care Services
Midlands Louth Meath Community Health Organisation