



Oifig Náisiúnta Sláinte Béal,
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Deputy Claire Kerrane
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ 33021/25: To ask the Minister for Health the number of dentists in the State today who provide services to medical card patients under the scheme for free; if she is concerned as to the significant drop in dentists providing these services; if she will re-engage to try and bring more dentists back into the scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy Kerrane,

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.

The HSE makes dental services available to adults with full eligibility through the Dental Treatment Services Scheme, which enables medical card holders to attend contracted dentists- the scheme has a list of treatment items which are funded through the scheme.

There are 833 (at end June 2025) contracted dentists within the scheme.

The DTSS is a “choice of dentist” scheme for patients, which does not require the patient to register with a particular dentist and enables medical card holders to attend any DTSS contractor directly without recourse to the HSE. Dentists choose to join the DTSS depending on their own clinical and business arrangements. As there are no obligations on dentists to join the scheme, this limits the options to recruit additional dentists to the scheme.

The number of dentists contracted and the number of dentists claiming per month has remained relatively stable for the past 18 months. As all dental practices are increasingly busy, the HSE is aware that DTSS contractors may have limited capacity to take on new patients. A process to update the contract numbers was undertaken in June 2023. The HSE corresponded with contract holders requesting they review their availability for provision of care for medical card holders. Several contractors contacted the service to advise that while they remain active on the scheme, they have no availability within the practice for new patients- either private or DTSS. Dental contractors are obliged to provide the HSE with 3 months’ notice prior to leaving the scheme.

Availability of appointments fluctuates according to the daily capacity of the practices, with additional capacity limited to the number of clinicians and clinical hours worked within the practice.

Oral healthcare services for adults are included in the reorientation of services described in Smile Agus Sláinte (National Oral Health Policy) – the implementation of which is included in priorities and funding from budget 2025.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but if you require further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Anne O'Neill
Assistant National Director, Oral Health