



Mari O'Donovan,
Interim Head of Service,
Cúram Príomhúil
FSS an Iardheiscirt

Áras na Ceachan,
Páirc Ghnó agus Teicneolaíochta,
Bóthar na Modh Feirme,
Corcaigh. T12 XHT4

Mari O'Donovan,
Interim Head of Service,
Primary Care
HSE South West

Caha House,
Business and Technology Park,
Model Farm Road,
Cork. T12 XHT4

southwest.hse.ie
E: Mari.ODonovan@hse.ie

23rd May, 2025

Mr. Pa Daly, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ ref 23759/25:

"To ask the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting dental appointments in County Kerry, broken down by area and by length of time, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter".

Dear Deputy Daly,

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 HSE Kerry Dental Service provides emergency dental care for all children under the age of 16 in County Kerry. Emergency and comprehensive dental care is provided for those with special dental needs. This service includes access to emergency treatment on the day of contact, along with appropriate follow-up care. For Dental Treatment Service Scheme (DTSS) -eligible individuals who are unable to access dental care privately under the medical card scheme and who present with acute pain and/or infection, emergency management is also in place.

Comprehensive dental care, including orthodontic assessment, is currently offered to a targeted cohort of children in 6th class. There are approximately 2,000 children in the 2024/2025 cohort, and over 30% of children have completed their treatment to date. Completion of oral healthcare for this cohort remains a key priority for the service. There are some delays which are most pronounced in the Killarney area, where three dentists currently providing care to children, none of whom are employed on a full-time basis. Delays in recruitment and limited staffing as outlined have impacted service delivery, and these pressures are compounded by increased demands on the emergency dental service arising from population growth and changing demographics, which require us to redeploy staff to treat same.

To mitigate these delays, several measures are in place:

- Redistribution of some children to be seen at Tralee Primary Care Centre.
- Additional staffing support from other HSE clinics where possible.

The HSE Kerry Dental Service is delivered by 11 general dental surgeons and 2 senior dental surgeons. One of the senior dental surgeons is a special needs dentist providing care for children with complex needs. Most general dental surgeons are employed on a part-time basis.

In view of the current resource constraints, the service continues to prioritise:

- Same-day access for emergency dental care.
- Completion of comprehensive care (including orthodontic assessment under HSE criteria) for the full 2024/2025 6th class cohort by December 2025.
- Dental treatment under general anaesthetic where appropriate.
- Dental care for patients with special dental needs
- The service intends that care for 2nd class children will commence towards the end of 2025, but this remains dependent on available capacity and the extent of clinical needs within the priority groups outlined above.

Seirbhís sláinte a thógáil a bhfuil ár bpobal bródúil aisti
Building a health service our community is proud of



The HSE Primary Care Dental Service manages waiting lists for children; and adults and children with special care needs that require dental treatment under general anaesthetic (GA). Dental treatment requiring general anaesthetic is performed in acute hospitals across Cork and Kerry i.e. Cork University Hospital, Mallow General Hospital, University Hospital Kerry. Kerry Dental Service have limited access to dental treatment under GA in the Bon Secours Hospital, Tralee for children with special care needs, previously augmented under the "Good Help Fund" initiative. Please note the number of children waiting dental treatment under general anaesthetic for University Hospital, Kerry is 137, with a further 22 children with special care needs waiting dental treatment under general anaesthetic in the Bon Secours Hospital, Tralee.

As mentioned above, all children under 16 years are eligible for an emergency dental service. The parent of any child under 16 can contact their local HSE dental clinic for an urgent appointment where a child is in acute dental pain or has a dental infection. Details for HSE dental clinics across Cork and Kerry can be found on the HSE website: www.hse.ie.

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

Yours sincerely,

Mari O'Donovan
Interim Head of Service - Primary Care,
HSE South West