



30th June 2025

Deputy Matt Carthy
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Re PQ 24145/25: To ask the Minister for Health if she will report on the provision of orthodontic services in the north-east region; the reasons for delays in accessing services; and her proposals to ensure adequate service levels – Matt Carthy

Dear Deputy Carthy

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.

Orthodontic current service provision in the Louth/Meath Region are as follows:

Clinic	Clinical Staff	WTE	Clerical Staff	WTE
Navan Orthodontic	2 x Specialist Orthodontist 1 x Oral Hygienist 1 x Oral Therapist 4 x Dental Nurses 1x Dental Nurse on Mat Leave	2 x 1.0 0.6 1.0 2 x 0.8 2 x 1.0 1 x 0.9	1 x Grade 4 Clerical Officer	1.0
VACANT POST NAVAN	1 x Orthodontic Consultant	1.0	1 x Grade 3 Clerical Officer	0.6
Dundalk Orthodontic	1 x Oral Hygienist 3 x Dental Nurses	1.0 1 x 0.6 1 x 0.4 1 x 1.0	1 x Grade 3 Clerical Officer	0.8
VACANT POSTS DUNDALK	1 x Orthodontic Consultant 2 x Orthodontic Specialist	1.0 1 x 0.2 1 x 1.0		

At this time, the Department is under resourced with a vacant Consultant Orthodontist post 1.0 WTE for Louth/Meath Region and 1.20 WTE vacant Specialist Orthodontist posts in Dundalk Clinic as well as a vacant Clerical Officer grade III 0.6 WTE for the Navan Orthodontic Clinic.



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.



Within CHO8 we have provided the following:

1. In 2024, Primary Care funded 40 patients in interrupted care and in critical need to have their treatment completed to be transferred to an Orthodontic private practice in Northern Ireland.
2. From May 2024 to April 2025 a specialist Orthodontist based in Longford travelled to Navan and Dundalk providing approximately 1-2 days per month over this period for debonds and interrupted care patients attending Louth Orthodontic Service.
3. The 2.0 WTE Specialist Orthodontists based in Navan providing orthodontic care for both Meath and Cavan patients, have also provided emergency appointments for patients who would normally attend the Louth Orthodontic Service. This up to 31 May 2025 has included:
 - 53 appointments for 51 patients on the waiting list,
 - 11 orthognathic patients and 5 patients in interrupted care have transferred to the care of a Specialist Orthodontist in Navan
 - 63 patients whom have had their oral surgery or where the HSE Dental service have flagged for potential orthodontic care are being monitored and reviewed until the vacant posts are filled in Dundalk.
4. To address this ongoing deficit and provide the remaining patients who are in interrupted care (i.e. have an appliance), additional support will be provided by two Orthodontists from other areas. These two Orthodontists will continue the treatment of these interrupted care patients, including the remaining patients in interrupted care have their treatment is completed or new staff are recruited

I trust the above is in order but please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further queries in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Niamh Clarke'.

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