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23 June 2025

Deputy David Cullinane  
Dáil Eireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**PQ 28706/25: To ask the Minister for Health the annual expenditure on the school dental screening programme; the number of children screened; the estimated number of children who are eligible for a screening who do not receive a screening; and the estimated expenditure should every eligible child receive a screening and the typical level of care provided on average.**

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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 Health Services Executive delivers dental services to children under the age of 16, provided through 17 Dental Areas, all of which continue to provide routine services.

The school dental service provides examination and any necessary preventive and restorative treatment noted at examination. The programme commences with 6<sup>th</sup> class and follows with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>- depending on available resources. Children are seen at ages that correspond with dental developmental milestones to identify opportunities for timely preventive interventions such as fissure sealants and the need for restorative treatment, as well as monitoring the eruption of the permanent dentition including possible orthodontic anomalies requiring referral for HSE orthodontic assessment. As part of targeting of resources, each dental service maintains a commitment to urgent/emergency treatment for the relief of pain, infection, and the sequelae of trauma.

Table 1 below provides KPI data on the total number of dental examinations undertaken within the Community Dental Service in 2024 for those who are participating in a targeted programme (target group 6-8yrs of age /1st or 2nd class, target group 11-13yrs of age / 5th or 6th class and other target groups).

**Table 1: No. of new oral health patients in target groups attending for scheduled assessment (2023-YTD April 2025)**

KPI Metric	2023	2024	YTD April 2025
No. of new oral health patients in target group 6-8 years of age /1st or 2nd class attending for scheduled assessment	12384	14898	3240
No. of new oral health patients in target group 11-13 years of age / 5th or 6th class attending for scheduled assessment	49988	51573	13051
<b>Total no. of new oral health patients in target groups attending for scheduled assessment</b>	<b>104488</b>	<b>106703</b>	<b>25896</b>

The Department of Education publishes the number of children in each school year annually. Using the data published for the year 2024, the number of children in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes in the school enrollment for academic year 2023/24 is 65960, 69390, and 70621, respectively (205,971 in total) who meet the criteria for eligibility.

The expenditure for the HSE Community Dental Service is not held separately for the children and special care services. The table below provides the requested data detailed for years 2023- 2024.

Full Year Dental Expenditure Summary	2023 €'000	2024 €'000
Expenditure Community Dental Service	62,558	66,037

The HSE cannot provide an estimated expenditure should every child be screened. The dental service's obligation is to provide preventive and restorative care for conditions identified at examination. The number of appointments and types of treatment to be provided are the cost drivers for the service and will vary from patient to patient. The expenditure provided includes cost associated with providing an emergency service as well as costs to provide a limited range of services to adults (special care and/or emergency access to DTSS in some geographical areas).

The HSE's 2025 National Service Plan aims to continue to develop services and implement waiting list initiatives across a range of dental and orthodontic services and maximise activity across these services to manage waiting lists and waiting times. The service plan supports the implementation of the Government's National Oral Health Policy, Smile Agus Sláinte, including the development of comprehensive oral healthcare packages for roll-out to children aged from birth to seven years of age.

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**