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**04 May 2021**

**Deputy Michael Healy Rae  
Dáil Eireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2**

**19900/21: To ask the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding access to dentistry in nursing homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Details supplied: Minister the following has been outlined to me which I believe to be totally crazy and unfair and unjust. The residents of nursing homes who wish to access dentists to come into the home like they had done in the past to treat the patients that whole service has now been stopped. Dentists in different areas are saying they will not take medical card holders. The majority of these people obviously have a medical card and surely this is very wrong that they would be denied this very important service. Management and proprietors of nursing homes are most upset at this development. How do you expect older people that we should be treating with dignity and respect are suppose to manage without this most vital basic requirement.

Dear Deputy Healy Rae,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted for response.

The HSE is aware that some medical card holders have experienced difficulties in accessing dental treatment under the Dental Treatment Services Scheme.

Where this is made known to the HSE, each enquiry and representation is followed up by local community services who seek to assist medical card holders.

In the course of 2020, services were curtailed for a period due to Covid-19 restrictions. Revised infection prevention and control measures have reduced throughput in dental practices. A number of dental contractors have resigned from the scheme, which has also affected access for patients.

Covid-19 restrictions also curtailed access for dentists in attending nursing homes to provide care, and restrictions on residents leaving nursing homes to access care, but with the easing of restrictions access to care is expected to improve.

As well as assisting medical card holders, the HSE is working closely with the Department of Health in relation to the operation of the scheme, and addressing difficulties faced by some patients accessing services.

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

Yours Sincerely,



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**Joseph Green**  
**AND, National Oral Health Lead - Operations**