



Oifig Náisiúnta Sláinte Béal,
Áras Phlásóg na Rós Coimpléasc Gnó na hOllscoile,
An Pháirc Náisiúnta Teicneolaíochta, Caladh an Treoigh, Luimneach
Teil: 061 492068
E: nationaloralhealth@hse.ie
National Oral Health Office
Roselawn House, University Business Complex,
National Technology Park, Castletroy, Limerick
Tel: 061 492068
Email: nationaloralhealth@hse.ie

10 May 2024

**Deputy Colm Burke
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

PQ 14870/24: To ask the Minister for Health if he will set aside funding to hire 30 specialist orthodontists to address the up to three-year waiting lists for orthodontic care; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Burke,

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 Orthodontic Service is provided in Regional Orthodontic Departments. Access to treatment with the HSE Orthodontic Service is limited to those children with the most severe and complex orthodontic treatment needs. Referral for orthodontic assessment is usually made in 6th Class. The Modified Index of Treatment Needs (Modified IOTN) system is used in all regions to determine if a child will be accepted for treatment. There are a number of categories within the Modified IOTN system, and these are used to prioritise care, children whose treatment need is assessed as being in Grade 4 or Grade 5 of the Index are offered treatment with the HSE. Patients and their parents face difficulties in accessing orthodontic treatment with the HSE. These difficulties are expressed through the very high numbers waiting for assessment, and in both the numbers waiting for treatment and the length of time waiting for treatment. The predominant causative factor is lack of treatment capacity in the service.

Significant additional funding was provided to the National Oral Health Office to fund orthodontic patients waiting for extended periods of time. Patients in the IOTN 4 category were identified for contracted care. In 2023 over 2,000 patients were removed from the HSE's Grade 4 orthodontic treatment waiting list through this funding. In addition, a new orthognathic (jaw) surgery waiting list initiative commenced in September 2023. These are complex surgeries which require a lengthy hospital stay. This year, 20 patients have received surgery to-date and 156 patients have been removed from the Grade 4 waiting list. Having made significant improvements on Grade 4 waiting lists in most areas, work has commenced on a framework agreement for Grade 5 patients with specific clinical requirements suitable for contracted care.



Oifig Náisiúnta Sláinte Béal,
Áras Phlásóg na Rós Coimpléasc Gnó na hOllscoile,
An Pháirc Náisiúnta Teicneolaíochta, Caladh an Treoigh, Luimneach
Teil: 061 492068
E: nationaloralhealth@hse.ie
National Oral Health Office
Roselawn House, University Business Complex,
National Technology Park, Castletroy, Limerick
Tel: 061 492068
Email: nationaloralhealth@hse.ie

The HSE's 2024 National Service Plan continues to support the development of 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 HSE Community Dental and Orthodontic Service is impacted by difficulties in recruiting new staff- which is experienced across a range of health services, both private and public. The HSE National Oral Health Office works with the HSE National HR, Recruitment Reform and Resourcing Programme on identifying any resourcing challenges that may be experienced by the dental and oral health professions. The National Oral Health Policy also contains a range of strategic workforce planning actions to increase workforce capacity, in support of improving patient access to care.

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

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dr Anne O'Neill".

Anne O'Neill
Assistant National Director, Oral Health