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**25 March 2024**

**Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú  
Dáil Eireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2**

**3048/24: Clarifications**

Why are the current grade 4s being seen ahead of the higher clinical need grade 5s?

This is the core of the issue that has been brought to me wherein those with higher clinical need are not prioritised.

The reality of the situation, certainly in the constituency of Louth, is that there are very few grade 5s getting treatment with the HSE Orthodontic Service. They have no choice but to wait.

While it is accepted that there is an assessment on the feasibility of a similar initiative for grade 5s, and bearing in mind that they are more complex cases, I would be grateful if you can also let me know at what stage this assessment is at, what the timeline would be and if it has so far been costed?

You might also let me know if any or all of the grade 5s are 'special cases' where only specially qualified private practitioners are able to treat them?

Dear Deputy Ó Murchú,

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 adopted the modified IOTN (Index of treatment Need) as part of the Orthodontic Guidelines in 2007. The index categorises patients according to the impact of their orthodontic problem- with Grade 5 categories having more severe orthodontic problems than those in Grade 4. The current waiting list initiative targeted those patients in Grade 4 category D subgroup which were identified as being easily assigned to a funded treatment scheme due to the nature of their orthodontic problem.

Grade 5 subcategories include orthodontic problems which may necessitate surgical planning as part of treatment care, which increases the difficulty in creating a contracted framework. Treatment requires the coordination of more than one service, which may include maxillofacial surgery, which is not a routine orthodontic case.

One subcategory of Grade 5 IOTN patient has been identified as potentially suitable for assignment to a funded treatment scheme.

The National Oral Health Office in conjunction with the HSE Orthodontic Service are currently assessing the feasibility of a similar initiative for these Grade 5 patients in 2024. This will involve a separate tender to be published on the government etenders website. The National Oral Health Office is currently finalising this process with HSE Procurement and expect the tender to be published in April 2024. Tender submissions will be invited from orthodontists who are registered with the Dental Council of Ireland specialist Division of Orthodontics.

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

Yours Sincerely,

*Dr Anne M O Neill*

**Dr Anne M O Neill  
AND, Oral Health**