



Oifig Náisiúnta Sláinte Béil,
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**Deputy Brian Stanley
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

PQ 31565/24: To ask the Minister for Health the number of dentists now providing services under the dental treatment services scheme; the progress being made to improve the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Stanley,

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 supports adult medical holders accessing dental care through a scheme known as the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS). Unlike the accessing medical care under the GMS, the DTSS is a “choice of dentist” scheme which does not require the patient to register with a particular dentist. While that allows patients the opportunity to select a new dentist for each course of treatment, it also allows dentists to complete their responsibility to the patient once a course of treatment has been completed.

As you are no doubt aware, the DTSS has had difficulty over a number of years. It currently provides additional supports for patients, who have a range underlying medical conditions. As the availability of dentists has changed in the Irish marketplace, there have been changes in the number of clinicians holding contracts. We continue to see new contracts being signed, and significant number of treatments being provided to patients.

There are 809 private dentists contracted to the DTSS scheme at end June 2024, with approximately 600 claiming for treatments on a monthly basis. Several contractors responded to the National Oral Health Office correspondence to advise that while they remain active on the scheme, they have no availability within the practice for new patients- either private or DTSS. This lack of access for new patients is being reflected across the dental community as a whole.

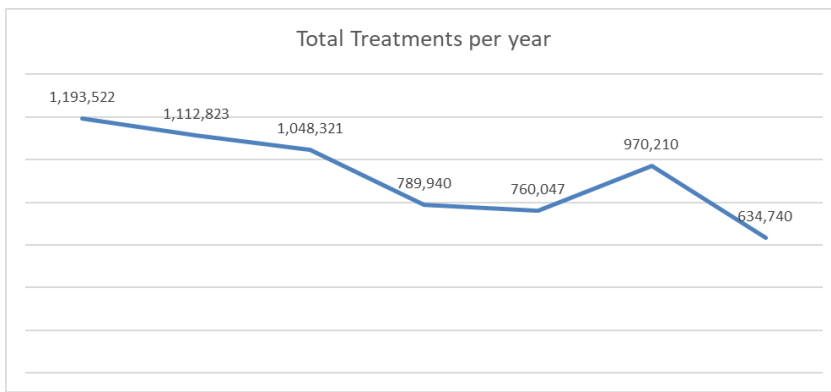
The dominant DTSS issue remaining unresolved is capacity in general and geographical access in some areas in particular. As the scheme is a voluntary contract, attracting new contracts on a targeted geographical basis remains difficult. However, changes to funding of some items within the Scheme in May 2022 has increased their availability to patients (based on the number of items provided since that date).

Oral healthcare services for adults are included in the reorientation of services described in Smile Agus Sláinte (National Oral Health Policy) – the implementation of which is included in



priorities and funding from budget 2023. A Phase One Implementation Plan (2024-2026) is at an advanced stage of development and includes the incorporation of preventive strategies for adult medical card holders as the first priority for redevelopment of the DTSS. In addition, the reorganisation of the HSE into Health Regions, further divided into Integrated Health Areas, where the emphasis is on developing services for local populations, will provide a structure against which the DTSS can be redeveloped.

I include below some information on the activity within the Scheme.



Graph 1: Total treatments per year 2017 - 2024 (to date)

2017	2018	2019	2022	2021	2022	2023
€ 63,298,623	€ 58,788,230	€ 56,238,325	€ 40,557,661	€ 39,595,484	€49,437,639	€64,792,282

Table 1: Payments made to Dentists on the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) 2017- 2023

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