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**Deputy Richard Bruton
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

31918/24: To ask the Minister for Health if he has sanctioned a scheme for children on orthodontic waiting lists to see private practitioners for treatment; the categories of orthodontic treatment to which the scheme applies; and if he has plans to extend this scheme in any manner.

Dear Deputy Bruton,

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 funds orthodontic treatment for children who eligibility is defined by a clinical assessment and categorisation against an internationally recognised orthodontic index.

The IOTN (Index of Orthodontic Treatment Need) categorises patients into five groups based on clinical need. The HSE National Orthodontic treatment guidelines provides funding for those assessed as grade 5 and a limited range of grade 4 IOTN patient categories, who are placed on treatment waiting lists across the Orthodontic Service nationally. The Department of Health have made additional funding available for waiting list initiatives, which has enabled the National Oral Health Office to access funding for additional treatment places for patients who experience long waiting periods on HSE orthodontic waiting lists.

The Orthodontic Waiting List Initiative is managed by National Oral Health Office. Treatment is outsourced under a structured procurement framework to private service providers contracted to the HSE. The initial initiative targeted patients assessed as HSE Modified IOTN Grade 4, and is in addition to the treatment places available within the HSE Orthodontic Service. In 2023, over 2,000 patients were removed from the HSE's Grade 4 orthodontic treatment waiting list through this funding.

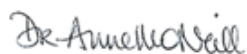
Separate to the IOTN Grade 4 initiative, an orthognathic (jaw) surgery waiting list initiative commenced in September 2023. This initiative provides funding and supports patients accessing facial surgery required to provide them with a successful completion of their orthodontic needs. This year to date, 20 patients have been supported by this initiative in accessing surgery in addition to those accessing surgery through their regional orthodontic unit.

Having reduced waiting periods on Grade 4 waiting lists in most areas, work has commenced on a framework agreement for a range of Grade 5 patients whose specific clinical requirements were deemed amenable for contracted care. The National Oral Health Office in conjunction with the HSE Orthodontic Services developed a waiting list initiative for Grade 5 patients in 2024, the tender for which has been published on the government eTenders website. Tender submissions were invited and received from orthodontists who are registered with the Dental Council of Ireland specialist Division of Orthodontics.

The tender process is now complete and successful tenderers have been notified. The procurement framework has specific requirements (cooling off period) after which National Oral Health Office will proceed with the commencement of formal business processes, i.e. Garda Vetting, Practice Inspections etc. to ensure quality and safety to all patients being invited to transfer. As this may take some time it is anticipated that patients will be contacted in Q4 2024 - Q1 2025.

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
AND, Oral Health