



22nd November 2024

Deputy Darren O'Rourke
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Re PQ 44513/24- To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons within CHO8 on a waiting list for dental services.

Dear Deputy O'Rourke

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and outlined the position as follows.

School Year	Numbers waiting Louth	Numbers waiting Meath	Numbers waiting Longford/Westmeath	Numbers waiting Laois/Offaly
2020-2021	nil	nil	nil	1410
2021-2022	40	nil	nil	2661
2022-2023	21076	661	nil	2560
2023-2024	2552	2635	1271	2594

NB 2024-2025 Figures currently being collated from Primary Schools

As detailed above, the schools dental programme in Louth Meath is three years behind the current 6th class academic cohort, with the service currently targeting 6th class 2021-22 / 2022-23 To ensure a fair and equitable service, children are being called in order of their position on the waiting list.

The schools dental programme in Laois/ Offaly is four years behind the current 6th class academic cohort, with the service currently targeting 6th class 2021-22 / 2022-23. Laois in particular had 1.2 WTE General dental surgeon vacant from 2019 to 2022, which coincided with COVID restrictions. The service in Laois/Offaly currently has 3.2 WTE dentists in place.

To reduce these waiting list numbers, the Midlands Dental Service has put in the following activities to support the Laois/Offaly waiting list;

- Dentists from the Longford /Westmeath area have been re-directed to Laois/Offaly
- two extra evening sessions per week in Portlaoise are ongoing
- two extra daytime sessions in Tullamore are ongoing

The following measures are continually being reviewed to improve the dental service in general for the eligible population and to address the treatment waiting lists outlined above;

- a) Increase in contract hours of existing staff
- b) Recruitment of additional dental teams
- c) Overtime hours
- d) Employing agency staff



In relation to recruitment, there would appear to be a national shortage of both Dental Surgeons and Dental hygienists owing to the significant challenges faced nationally in attempting to fill vacant posts, either through recruitment campaigns or using numerous recruitment agencies.

There are currently three vacancies for Dental Surgeon positions which are again progressing through recruitment and it is hoped that these successive campaigns will result in the successful filling of these vacancies.

I trust the above is in order but please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further queries in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Ruane', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joseph Ruane
Head of Primary Care Services
Midlands Louth Meath Community Health Organisation