



Oifig um Cheannasai Seirbhíse do Chúram Príomhúil
Cúram Sláinte Phobail FSS an Mheán Iarthair
Ascaill Bhaile Choimín,
Páirc Gnó an Ráithín,
Ráithín, Luimneach V94 D1W9
Teil: 061 483226

Office of the Head of Service for Primary Care
HSE Mid West Community Healthcare
Ballycummin Ave,
Raheen Business Park,
Raheen, Limerick V94 D1W9
Tel: 061 483226

16th September 2024

Deputy Niall Collins
Red House Hill
Patrickswell
Co. Limerick

Re: PQ 34380/24 - “To ask the Minister for Health the current recruitment situation in relation to Specialist Orthodontists in Limerick; when the waiting times will reduce; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Collins,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in regard to your parliamentary question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

I can advise that since May 2022, the HSE has conducted five recruitment campaigns (most recently in August 2024) in an attempt to fill vacant Specialist Orthodontist posts across the HSE Mid West area.

While the service was successful in recruiting one additional Specialist Orthodontist (start date 21/07/24), the most recent recruitment campaign (closing date 30/08/24) failed to attract any applicants. In an effort to attract suitably trained and qualified applicants, the HSE now plans to proceed with an international recruitment campaign for vacant Specialist Orthodontist posts within the service in the Mid West region. It can be anticipated that when vacant posts have been filled within the service, the waiting time for patients to commence orthodontic treatment will be reduced significantly.

Dr. Mullane, Lead Orthodontist, HSE Mid West advised that a recent validation exercise carried out by the HSE Orthodontic & Restorative Service has resulted in a 23.1% reduction in the waiting time for patients to commence orthodontic treatment.

Dr. Mullane advised that as part of the 6th class dental examination, if the Dental Surgeon deems that a child meets the criteria in the Department of Health guidelines for orthodontic assessment (Modified Index of Orthodontic Treatment Need IOTN), he/she will refer the child to the HSE Orthodontic Services for assessment. Following orthodontic assessment, patients who are considered eligible for HSE orthodontic treatment are categorised into two grades:

- Grade 5: Severe malocclusion e.g. impacted teeth, multiple missing teeth, increased overjet (prominence of the teeth);
- Grade 4: Less severe malocclusion e.g. deep overbite, cross-bite, crowding.

While Grade 5 patients are given priority within the existing waiting list protocol, given the demands on the HSE Orthodontic Service and the current resources available in terms of manpower, the average waiting time for patients in both categories to commence orthodontic treatment is four years. It must be stressed that this waiting time is not unique to the Mid West area and national data confirms that patients in other regions experience a similar waiting time for treatment.

In an effort to reduce the waiting time for patients to commence orthodontic treatment, some Grade 4 patients (with the exception of those who have a surgical component to their treatment needs) are outsourced to private service providers through the National Orthodontic Waiting List Initiative which has been ongoing since 2016. Continued engagement with this initiative is dependent on the availability of funding. It can be anticipated that ongoing funding for this initiative will continue to have a very positive impact on the waiting times for Grade 4 patients.

Plans to outsource orthodontic treatment for Grade 5a patients in the 11 to 14 year age group under the National Orthodontic Treatment Waiting List Initiative is currently at procurement stage. Until this process has been finalised, the HSE does not have a timeframe for the commencement of this initiative.

I trust this information addresses the issues raised in your representation.

Yours sincerely,



Margaret Costello
Head of Service
Primary Care