

30th January, 2025

Mr. Pa Daly, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 1940/25

"To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons within CHO4 on a waiting list for dental service in the years 2019 to date, in tabular form".

PQ ref 1750/25

"To ask the Minister for Health if he will report on adult dental waiting lists in Kerry; to provide a breakdown of the number on the waiting list; to provide a breakdown of the average length of time spent on waiting list in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and to date in 2025; and if he will make a statement on the matter".

PQ ref 1751/25

"To ask the Minister for Health if he will report on child dental waiting lists in Kerry; to provide a breakdown of the number on the waiting list; to provide a breakdown of the average length of time spent on waiting list; in 2020, 2022, 2023, 2024 and to date in 2025; and if he will make a statement on the matter".

Dear Deputy Daly,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The HSE Primary Care Dental Service provides dental treatment to eligible children, medical card holders, adults and children with special needs and others in the care of the HSE at various locations throughout Cork and Kerry. Children under 16 years of age are treated in HSE dental clinics and adults are treated by private dental practitioners contracted to the Health Services under the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS).

The HSE Primary Care Dental Service manages waiting lists for children, adults and children with special care needs that require dental treatment under general anesthetic (GA). Dental treatment requiring general anesthetic is performed in acute hospitals across Cork and Kerry i.e. Cork University Hospital, Mallow General Hospital, University Hospital Kerry. Kerry Dental Service have limited access to dental treatment under general anesthetic in the Bon Secours Hospital, Tralee for children with special care needs, augmented under the "Good Help Fund" initiative. Unfortunately, due to limited available resources access to additional theatre sessions remains an on-going challenge across all CKCH Oral Health Services.

Please see below the number of patients waiting for dentistry under General Anesthetic (data provided as at year end Quarter 4, 2019 – 2024):

No of patients waiting for Denistry under GA 2019 - 2024	Q4/2019	Q4/2020	Q4/2021	Q4/2022	Q4/2023	Q4/2024
Paediatric Extractions Cork	340	GA Service Suspended COVID	444	588	500	678
Paediatric Extractions Kerry	118 (combined special needs/childrens service)	GA Service Suspended COVID	83	92	112	84
Children Special Care Needs Cork	72	GA Service Suspended COVID	110	194	210	395
Children Special Care Needs Kerry	Included in childrens figure not possible to aggregate for this year	GA Service Suspended COVID	31	30	12	14
Adult Special Care Needs Cork & Kerry	0	GA Service Suspended COVID	101	120	112	127

Please note waiting list data is not available for 2020 as the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 has had a significant impact on the provision of all dental services throughout Cork and Kerry. As part of the COVID-19 pandemic response the HSE Dental Service had to curtail service provision to emergency service provision only and staff were largely redeployed into COVID testing, contact tracing and the vaccination program. The pandemic also curtailed the operation of oral surgery lists in acute hospital sites.

No of patients waiting for Denistry under GA 2024	Q1/2024	Q2/2024	Q3/2024	Q4/2024
Paediatric Extractions Cork CUH	750	587	599	678
Paediatric Extractions Kerry UHK	108	112	86	84
Children Special Care Needs Cork	292	300	395	395
Children Special Care Needs Kerry	15	17	13	14
Adult Special Care Needs Cork & Kerry	125	128	127	127

Oral Surgery Waiting Lists:

There are a number of patients across Cork City, Cork Country, Kerry and surrounding counties on a waiting list for oral surgery consultation and oral surgery dentistry under general anaesthetic. The volume of patients waiting oral surgery consultation and treatment on the waiting lists is extremely high, However, increased patient throughput, access to the National Oral Health Office minor oral surgery waiting list initiative and on-going waiting list validation has seen the numbers waiting oral surgery consultation reduced by almost 45% since January 2024. The waiting list for oral surgery consultation is currently running at approximately 2.5 years.

Oral Surgery waiting list:

Oral Surgery waiting lists 2024:	Q1/2024	Q2/2024	Q3/2024	Q4/2024
Oral Surgery Consultation	1448	1210	961	970
Oral Surgery under GA	105	112	108	102

Orthodontic Service Waiting Lists:

The primary goal of the Health Service Executive (HSE) Orthodontic Service is to improve the appearance and function of misaligned or crooked teeth, with free orthodontic treatment being provided to children with the most severe orthodontic problems. Qualification for treatment is determined by nationally agreed eligibility guidelines based on an international grading system (IOTN). All referrals for the service are triaged and given a priority rating by the clinical team.

The HSE Orthodontic Service at St. Finbarr's Hospital covers Cork North Lee, Cork South Lee, West Cork and Kerry, therefore, the volume of children waiting to be assessed and treated on the waiting lists are extremely high. Orthodontic services for named schools in North Cork are provided by Cork University Dental School and Hospital (CUDSH) on behalf of the HSE under the Service Level Agreement process, through their post-graduate orthodontic programme, whereby post-graduate students treat a defined number of patients as part of this programme which commences every 3 years.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mari O'Donovan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a distinct 'O'.

Mari O'Donovan
Interim Head of Service - Primary Care,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare