

Dental Factsheet

Overall investment in public oral healthcare services

- This Government has invested over **€200 million** annually in the provision of oral healthcare, targeting those most in need of State support to access care, across:
 - The HSE Public Dental Service.
 - HSE Orthodontic Services.
 - The Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) for adult medical card holders; and
 - The Dental Treatment Benefit Scheme for insured workers, the self-employed and retired workers who have the necessary PRSI contributions. This is managed by the Department of Social Protection.
- A range of measures were put in place on 1 May 2022 within the **Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS)** for adult medical card holders to introduce and reintroduce elements of preventative care and **increase the fees paid to dental contractors for most treatment items by 40-60%**.
- In 2023, **154,864 additional treatments** were provided under the DTSS, with over **26,700 extra patients** treated when compared with 2022.
- An unprecedented additional allocation of €15 million in funding was made in Budget 2023, including:
 - €4 million of this allocation is targeting orthodontic care on a non-recurring basis, prioritising those who have been waiting the longest to access treatment.
 - €5 million of this additional allocation is being invested on a non-recurring basis to support the HSE Public Dental Service to provide care this year.
 - €4.75 million of the additional Budget allocation will support development of prevention-focused oral healthcare for children aged from 0-7 years.
- Additional investment has been provided to target orthodontic waiting lists, prioritising those who have been waiting the longest to access treatment. In 2023 over **2,000 patients** were removed from the HSE's Grade 4 orthodontic treatment waiting list through this funding. In addition, a new orthognathic (jaw) surgery waiting list initiative commenced in September 2023. These are complex surgeries which require a lengthy hospital stay.
- This year, 20 patients have received surgery to-date and 156 patients have been removed from the Grade 4 waiting list.

Implementation of the National Oral Health Policy

- This Government is committed to reforming oral healthcare services through the implementation of the National Oral Health Policy (NOHP), *Smile agus Sláinte*.
- The policy provides a framework and a set of action areas to support a comprehensive reform of oral healthcare service design and delivery.
- The policy supports the provision of all levels of care, by appropriate healthcare professionals and in the most suitable settings. It will support patient choice and access across the life course.
- The Policy reflects the World Health Organisation (WHO) approach grounded in primary health care and has been informed by, and aligned with, other relevant Government and health policies including *Sláintecare* and *Healthy Ireland*.
- The Department of Health is currently developing an over-arching implementation plan to cover the period 2024-2026.
- The HSE's Strategic Reform Lead is driving policy implementation across the organisation and moving forward with developing new services line with the Policy. Regarding service reform, the priorities for 2024, as set out the HSE's National Service Plan, include:
 - Development of a comprehensive phased policy implementation plan for the range of actions identified in the policy which are the HSE's responsibility, including stakeholder engagement and resource identification.
 - Progression of oral healthcare packages for children aged from birth to seven years of age.
 - The design of clinical elements for reformed preventative care for adult medical cardholders as referenced in the policy.

Oral Healthcare Workforce

- There are now **3,652 dentists** on the Dental Council register as on 2 April 2024. This is an **increase of 180 since March 2023 and is the highest number ever**.
- The Department acknowledges that there can be challenges recruiting in the dental and oral health professions. The HSE National Oral Health Office works with the HSE National HR, Recruitment Reform and Resourcing Programme on identifying any resourcing challenges that may be experienced by the dental and oral health professions.
- The National Oral Health Policy also contains a range of strategic workforce planning actions to increase workforce capacity, in support of improving

patient access to care. To support this work, the Department of Health is currently finalising a workforce census for oral healthcare.

Legislative Reform

- The Department of Health is committed to reviewing the Dentists Act 1985.
- The review and updating of the legislation is directly related to and will be informed by the wider implementation of the National Oral Health Policy, which envisages a fundamental reform of oral health services.
- The Minister met with the Dental Council on 15 January to discuss the regulatory powers available to them under The Dentists Act 1985, and the potential advancement of interim amendments.
- Since January, a series of thematic engagements between the Department of Health and the Dental Council to discuss legislative matters in more depth, have taken place.
- This consultative engagement programme will input into the overall regulatory reform programme that the Department is developing, with the objective of introducing a new modern regulatory framework for all relevant aspects of dentistry.

Pay for oral healthcare professionals

- The salary of a HSE General Dental Surgeon starts at €67,992 (excluding overtime, extra sessions etc.) and ranges up to €98,462, with promotion opportunities to Senior Dental Surgeon, Senior Administrative Dental Surgeon and Principal Dental Surgeon available.
- The salary of a HSE Dental Nurse ranges from €27,507 to €49,894 (excluding overtime etc.), with a promotion opportunity to Senior Dental Nurse available.
- The salary of a HSE Dental Hygienist ranges from €40,443 to €59,635 (excluding overtime etc.), with a promotion to Senior Dental Hygienist available.
- HSE Specialist Orthodontists are paid €163,292. Consultant Orthodontist pay depends on the contract type and starts at €215,122 for those on the Type B contract who are not covered by the settlement agreement.