



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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10th March 2009

PQ 9915/09

**Deputy Deirdre Clune,  
Dail Eireann,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.**

**Dear Deputy Clune,**

The Health Service Executive (HSE) – South (Cork & Kerry) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following Parliamentary Question, which was submitted to the Department for response.

**\* To ask the Minister for Health and Children if she is a position to provide dental services under general anaesthetic for adults with special needs at the Cork University Hospital; and if she will make a statement on the matter.**

Public dental treatment is provided to people with Special Needs through the public dental service provided in each local health office area. All persons with Special Needs, whether adult or child, are eligible to avail of the services provided by the HSE, i.e. immediate access to emergency care & early access to routine care. Every effort is made to ensure that clients do not have to wait unduly for these services and all waiting lists are reviewed and prioritised regularly.

The Principal Dental Surgeons co-ordinate the service and have dentists employed in each area who are qualified to deliver routine care including cleaning, extractions and fillings to people with special needs. Referrals are accepted from Intellectual Disability Service Providers, parents/carer's, GP's, and private Dentists etc. This service continues to be provided routinely up to the level of specialism the HSE clinic dentists have the capacity to provide. In less complex cases, this may include treatment under sedation. The HSE has supported the development of the skills and expertise of PCCC Dentists to deliver certain specialist services to children who require treatment under General Anaesthetic. One Dentist in the Region has also developed expertise in the delivery of care under Anaesthesia to adults with special needs.

However, when a general anaesthetic is required for more complex cases, the HSE needs to make a referral to the Dental School Dentists who provide the treatment under anaesthetic in the Cork University Hospital Dental Theatre.

#### **Dental Care For Adults With Special Needs Using General Anaesthetic**

The School of Dentistry has a weekly theatre session in Cork University Hospital to deal with the waiting list for both adults and children. Prior to 2008, this service had been provided by the Dental School under the Service Agreement that operated between the HSE and UCC. The issue of theatre dental services for adults with special needs arose in the South West during

2007 when the Dental School attached to UCC notified the HSE that they intended to discontinue providing a service to the adult cohort with special needs.

The School did indicate that they would complete the waiting list that existed up to the point when the service ceased in 2007 but no new referrals would be added to the list. Since that time, the HSE has maintained details of the clients who have been refused the service from the Dental School. Currently, the remaining adults on the Dental School waiting list are still being treated and work continues to address this. The HSE waiting list has not yet been addressed. The Dental School have committed to continuing the provision of emergency treatment only, to adults, under anaesthesia – usually extractions.

The HSE is currently in the process of reconfiguring Dental Theatre Services, in order to make provision for theatre time, to enhance and increase the level of routine dental care to adults with Special Needs who require anaesthesia. This service will be provided to all clients residing in Cork City and County and will be delivered by the PCCC Dentist. It was hoped that this additional theatre session could commence in December 2008, however while this was not possible, progress continues to be made and it is planned to commence service in April 2009. All the key stakeholders have agreed the model of service delivery and are finalizing the critical areas of clinical governance that are necessary for the service to be delivered to the required standards.

In the interim, adults with special needs will continue to avail of emergency General Anaesthetic dental services from the Dental School & Hospital in Cork.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.



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