

## **Corkman**

By Tim Ryan, Oireachtas Correspondent

### **Long waiting lists for orthodontic services highlighted**

An update plans to sort the long waiting times for orthodontic services in counties Cork and Kerry was sought in the Dáil by Fianna Fáil Deputy Michael Moynihan.

A total of 1,200 children in Cork and Kerry are in need of orthodontic treatment, with the vast majority in the grade 4 and grade 5 categories of higher-level need, he said. “There is an outcry about this characterised by the large number of parents who are calling into our clinics trying to get orthodontic treatment for the children. It is an emotive issue and there are other issues associated with it. There is a crisis in terms of those waiting for treatment, particularly in Cork and Kerry.”

In reply, Health Minister Simon Harris said a *Programme for a Partnership Government* contains a commitment to providing timely access to orthodontic care. “In order to address long waiting times, the HSE has procured orthodontic services in primary care from a number of private service providers and a budget of €1 million per annum is being dedicated to this initiative, which commenced in 2016,” he said. “To date, 142 patients from Cork and Kerry have been treated under this initiative. The Cork and Kerry community health care organisation, CHO, has also commenced a capacity planning review of orthodontic services. This will identify whether changes may be required to the current allocation of resources, including staff, in order to be more responsive to patients' needs.”

Nationally, the Minister said the HSE is also working on a programme to upskill dental hygienists and dental nurses to become orthodontic therapists. This will facilitate a greater throughput of patients, which has been very much welcomed by those working in dentistry.

“The national approach to future oral health service provision will be informed by the national oral health policy, which is currently being finalised,” he added. “I expect to publish that in early 2018. Resources are being finalised as part of the service plan. I expect more funding to be available to help utilise private providers while building up capacity in the public service, including in Cork and Kerry, in 2018.”

However, Deputy Moynihan said to have to wait for a report or a paper to state that more resources may be needed is fantasy stuff. “More resources are needed,” he said. “Something needs to be seriously done to tackle this issue and to discover how treatment can be secured for these children in a faster and more efficient way to ensure they get the treatment they require. Rather than waiting for a report, we need to act now.”

### **Public confidence in Garda management undermined**

Public confidence in the ability and credibility of Garda management has been seriously undermined, in particular, Garda management has shown no ability to respond effectively to

the modernisation agenda championed by the Garda Síochána Inspectorate, Labour Deputy Seán Sherlock told the Dáil.

The problem is not simply cultural, he said but structural. “We still do not have any body with the power, duty or capacity to bring senior Garda management into the modern age,” he said. “This is an age in which effectiveness, efficiency, openness, transparency and accountability are expected and delivered. Thus, we need the Policing Authority to take account of the series of impressive reports from the Garda Síochána Inspectorate and to insist that they are implemented by the Garda Commissioner. I do not mean simply that the authority should supervise the Commissioner - that is a vague concept to insert into statute. The Authority should have power, having adopted an inspectorate report, to direct the Commissioner, by order, to implement the report.”

Deputy Sherlock said he did not believe all structural reforms must await the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland. “Nor do I believe that the reports the inspectorate has already been published must be put on ice pending another review and report,” he said. “The reports make sense and they should be implemented now. Moreover, the Authority should be given the power to insist on it.”

“The reform agenda is long,” he said. “We need new members recruited to a force that is efficient and effective, one that uses modern equipment and policing methods to ensure the best possible results. We need a serious look at Garda formation and training. For example, would the college in Templemore serve us better if it was merged into a multidisciplinary third-level institution?”

### **Election of female chairperson of Cork County Board a positive step**

The election of Tracey Kennedy as the first female chairperson of Cork County Board of the GAA was highlighted in the Upper House by Cork Fine Gael Senator Tim Lombard.

That is a very positive statement on women's participation in sport, whether in playing or administration, he said.

“However, on a national level we need to have a framework in place to ensure the level of participation of females in sport is increased,” he said. “In that context, RTE must examine its policy on those who provide commentaries and are involved on panels. The coverage of female sport must be intensified. The appointment of Ms Tracey Kennedy is a very positive step, in particular for the GAA, especially in Cork, in having a female in a leading role. She is a wonderful character and I am sure she will do a very dynamic job in the years ahead. It is up to us in the Oireachtas to provide a framework and a strategy to ensure the participation of women is driven forward and that the appointment of Ms Tracey Kennedy is replicated around the country.”