



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

Office of the Head of Operations,
Disability Services/Social Care Division,
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick.

T: 00353 (0) 61 483369

Suíomh Gréasáin/Website: <http://www.hse.ie>

20th October 2021

Deputy Violet Anne Wynne,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: violetanne.wynne@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Wynne,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following parliamentary question, which was submitted to this department for response.

PQ 48624/21

To ask the Minister for Health the percentage of the children whose assessment of need has been completed in 2021 that have been successfully referred to and engaged with by a disability networks team; and the estimated waiting time between assessment and engagement with disability network team.

HSE Response

Historically children's disability services have been provided by a range of statutory and non-statutory service providers that delivered services based on a child's diagnosis or age. The type and level of service provided varied widely across the country. This resulted in a situation whereby access to services depended on where the child lived, where they went to school, their age and their diagnosis. In some cases, children were transferred between waiting lists as their diagnosis was unclear.

In parallel, many families were advised to apply for an Assessment of Need (AON) under the Disability Act (2005) as a means of securing a diagnosis and subsequent access to services. Consequently, waiting times for AON increased and the HSE was unable to meet its legislative obligations in this regard.

The Progressing Disability Services for Children & Young People (PDS) programme represents a major reform of services for children with complex needs. Children's Disability Network Teams are being established that will provide services for children with complex needs based on their needs and on their address. Access to these CDNTs is not linked to diagnosis or school placements. To date 85 CDNTs have been established. All ninety-one teams will be in place and delivering services before the end of December 2021.

To address issues associated with AON, the HSE implemented a Standard Operating Procedure for AON for all new applications from January 2020. This procedure defines an AON as a preliminary team assessment that determines whether or not a child has a disability as defined by the Act. This system is designed to ensure that children access timely assessments and intervention. Activity data for 2021 indicates that 2504 children had received a Preliminary Team Assessment at 31st August 2021. 89% of these children were referred to an intervention pathway based on the outcome of that assessment.

The establishment of CDNTs in association with implementation of this SOP ensures that children and families access appropriate supports as quickly as possible. As outlined in the Disability Capacity Review

(2021) additional resources are required for these services and waiting times are not optimal, however, these changes have impacted positively on the services available for children with complex needs and their families.

Yours sincerely,

Bernard O'Regan

Bernard O'Regan
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations