



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

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14<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Deputy Sorca Clarke,  
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Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
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Dear Deputy Clarke,

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: 47877/23**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of referrals that have been outsourced to private providers for assessments of need for 2021, 2022 and to date in 2023, in tabular form.*

**HSE Response**

The Assessment of Need process is set out in the Disability Act, 2005. The aim of an Assessment of Need under the Disability Act is to identify whether a person has a disability, the nature and extent of the disability, any health and education needs arising from that disability, as well as what services are required to meet those needs.

The numbers of applications for AON under the Act have risen steadily since its implementation in June 2007. 7,612 applications for AON were received in the most recent 4 quarters (Q3, 2022 – Q2 2023). This was the highest number of applications received in any 12 month period since Part 2 of the Act was commenced in June 2007.

Information is not collated regarding the number of Assessments of Needs that have been outsourced privately. The table on the next page gives information on the number of AONs completed in each quarter in 2021, 2022 and the most recent reported quarters in 2023 (Q1 and Q2 2023).

Please note that this information is extracted from the Assessment Officer System Database which does not distinguish between Assessments of Need carried out privately or by the HSE.



**Table 1 AONs completed**

<b>Q1 2021</b>	2693
<b>Q2 2021</b>	1268
<b>Q3 2021</b>	2243
<b>Q4 2021</b>	2149
<b>Q1 2022</b>	1719
<b>Q2 2022</b>	455
<b>Q3 2022</b>	450
<b>Q4 2022</b>	447
<b>Q1 2023</b>	560
<b>Q2 2023</b>	874

### **Actions to address AON waiting lists**

Approximately €11m has been allocated to address waiting lists for clinical assessments identified through the Assessment of Need process. This funding is being utilised to procure diagnostic ASD assessments from the private sector.

Progressing the outsourcing of these assessments is challenging however, in this regard, Disability Services nationally is working with HSE Procurement to develop a tender process and Service Specification for the delivery of Assessment of Need from private providers. A successful procurement process will facilitate the CDNTs to focus on the provision of intervention for children on their caseloads.

In parallel, a national procurement process is also being progressed.

In addition, the HSE at local level is using time related savings to source AON assessments privately for children in the order as registered on the AOS (AON information management system).

In line with appropriate procurement procedures, Garda vetting and due diligence practice, private providers are currently being contracted by the HSE to provide assessments and / or interventions. In such instances, the HSE ensures that the contracted providers are appropriately qualified and that any assessments or interventions are provided in line with the appropriate standards.

### **Assessment of Need Administrative Hubs**

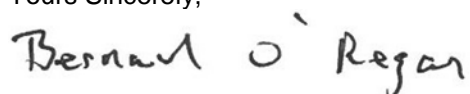
AON Administrative Hubs are now in place in Community Healthcare Areas (CHOs) 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8.

**Assessment hubs** have been established in CHOs 3, 6 and 9. CHO 3 is utilising existing staff reassigned from CDNT service. CHO 6's hub is pending recruitment of clinical specialist posts and in interim, the AON process is outsourced to a private service provider.

CHO 9 has recruited 2 of its 3 clinical specialists and recruitment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> is in train.

**It is important to note that children do not require an Assessment of Need as defined by the Disability Act (2005) in order to access a CDNT or Primary Care service.** They can be referred by a healthcare professional or parent/carer to the CDNT for children with complex needs as a result of their disability, or to Primary Care for children with non-complex needs

Yours Sincerely,



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

