



Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
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13th December 2023

Deputy Sean Sherlock,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: sean.sherlock@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

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

PQ: 53602/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth further to Parliamentary Question No. 978 of 7 November 2023, what services the assessment of need administrative hub in CHO7 will carry out; if there is a difference in the level of services that exist in the assessment hubs established in CHO3, 6 and 9; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ: 52603/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of assessment of needs carried out by the private sector following a referral from the HSE; the number per month in each of the past six months; the CHO location of each of these private referrals; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

In respect of those children applying for an Assessment under 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 HSE records data, pertaining to the assessment of need process, under the Disability Act, 2005. The specific detail regarding the number of assessment of needs carried out by the private sector is not collated.

AON is reported on quarterly.

Please see the table below which gives information on the number of AONs completed for each quarter so far in 2023. This is the most recent validated information available.



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.

2023	AONs completed
Q1	560
Q2	874

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 conclude 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 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 3rd is in train.

In general, AON Administration Hubs aim to provide a single point for receipt of all AON Applications, and allocation to Assessment Officers, to reduce any bottle necks and ensure spread of demand on Assessment Officers across all available resources.

AON Assessment Hubs include the above plus Stage 2 clinical assessment. This is where the CHOs vary i.e. providing all AON assessments, some AON with balance to private, some AON with balance to CDNTs and private.

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**

