



Oifig an Stiúrthóir Cúnta Náisiúnta,
Foireann Míchumais Náisiúnta,
An Chéad Urlár - Oifigí 13, 14, 15,
Áras Phlásóg na Rós, Coimpléasc Gnó na hOllscoile,
Páirc Náisiúnta Teicneolaíochta,
Caladh an Treoigh,
Luimneach.

Office of the Assistant National Director,
National Disability Team,
First Floor- Offices 13, 14, 15,
Roselawn House, University Business Complex,
National Technology Park,
Castletroy,
Limerick.

3rd May 2024

Deputy Thomas Gould,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: thomas.gould@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Gould,

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: 14605/24

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of children on waiting lists for an assessment of need for each month to date 2019-2024, inclusive, in tabular form; the number overdue for completion; and the average length of wait in Cork, by LHO or administrative area.

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 judgement of Ms Justice S Phelan in the case of CTM & JA v the HSE was delivered in March 2022. This judgment found that the Preliminary Team Assessment approach described in the HSE's Standard Operating Procedure for Assessment of Need does not meet the requirements of the Disability Act. This judgement in effect requires the HSE to deliver diagnostic assessments where necessary and appropriate as part of the Assessment of Need process. This ruling has had a significant impact operationally and has resulted in a growth in the numbers of overdue Assessments of Need. The requirement for services to prioritise the statutory Assessment of Need process has also impacted significantly on their capacity to provide necessary intervention / treatment for children with disabilities.

As a result of the Judgement, activity indicates that there has been an increase in the total number of applications 'overdue for completion', which now stands at 9,924 (including 369 applications for which an extended time-frame was negotiated with the parent on the grounds of there being exceptional circumstances as provided for in paragraph 10 of the regulations).



Overall, it is estimated that there are approximately 15,000 applications 'overdue for completion' at this time. This includes AONs currently overdue and Preliminary Team Assessments that now require diagnostic assessment. In addition, an estimated 8,000 new AONs are anticipated during 2024 based on the number of AONs received over in 2023.

Assessment of Need is reported on quarterly. Please see the table below which gives the number of AON applications overdue at the end of each quarter for 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and Q1, 2024 as extracted from the AOS (AON information management system).

Table 1: Applications overdue for completion end of each Quarter 2019 to end Q1, 2024

Year	End of Quarter	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
2019	Q1	3686	329	527	2830
	Q2	3768	381	659	2728
	Q3	4100	524	743	2833
	Q4	4644	525	863	3256
2020	Q1	5083	577	824	3682
	Q2	5533	498	1007	4028
	Q3	6058	348	921	4789
	Q4	5078	210	272	4596
2021	Q1	3503	282	306	2915
	Q2	3609	439	678	2492
	Q3	2907	460	462	1985
	Q4	1986	355	473	1157
2022	Q1	1718	267	338	1113
	Q2	2531	365	717	1449
	Q3	3494	469	832	2193
	Q4	4613	604	854	3155
2023	Q1	5484	503	775	4206
	Q2	6495	448	1075	4972
	Q3	7608	697	1035	5876
	Q4	8893	756	1174	6963
2024	Q1	9924	664	1119	8141

While data re average waiting time in Cork area is not reported nationally, the current average duration of the assessment process per report completed in this quarter was 21.15 months.

Actions to address AON waiting lists

The HSE's National Clinical Programme for People with Disability (NCPD) has led the process of developing a revised AON Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) incorporating guidance on completion of clinical assessment to replace the element of the SOP which was found to be non-compliant with the Disability Act (2005) – the Preliminary Team Assessment. This was launched on July 14th 2023.

Additional funding



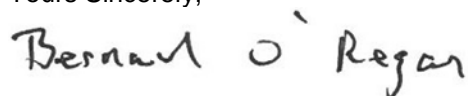
Approximately €10.5m was spent to address waiting lists for clinical assessments identified through the Assessment of Need process and in 2024, €5m in one off funding has been allocated. This funding is being utilised to procure diagnostic ASD assessments from the private sector. In addition, the HSE 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).

A National AON tender process has been completed for the delivery of Assessment of Need from private providers. This will provide limited additional private capacity in provision of AONs due to level of private service provider engaged already for AONs. However, learning from this tender process will be shared with CHOs to support standardisation across CHOs.

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.

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
Assistant National Director
National Disability Team

