



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.

23rd July 2024

Deputy Pauline Tully,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: pauline.tully@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Tully,

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: 33550/24

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of children in the State currently awaiting an assessment of needs; the number waiting less than three, three to six, six to 12 and more than 12 months, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

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 12,500 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. The most recent data available is the end of Quarter 1 2024. 9,924 applications are overdue for completion with 369 of these on the grounds of there being exceptional circumstances as provided for in paragraph 10 of the regulations.

Please see the Table below.

Table: Applications overdue for Completion on 31st March 2024.

CHO	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1		384	23	39	322
	Cavan/Monaghan	140	13	19	108
	Donegal	226	10	20	196
	Sligo/Leitrim	18	0	0	18
AREA 2		208	25	42	141
	Galway	118	16	23	79
	Mayo	69	6	13	50
	Roscommon	21	3	6	12
AREA 3		365	12	17	336
	Clare	44	3	4	37
	Limerick	187	4	2	181
	Tipperary N.R	134	5	11	118
AREA 4		798	89	108	601
	Kerry	33	8	3	22
	Cork North	192	21	26	145
	Cork North Lee	388	40	51	297
	Cork South Lee	161	18	23	120
	Cork West	24	2	5	17
AREA 5		482	51	56	375
	Carlow/Kilkenny	101	17	6	78
	Tipperary S.R	70	4	4	62
	Waterford	114	8	18	88
	Wexford	197	22	28	147
AREA 6		857	85	154	618
	Dublin South East	176	20	32	124
	Dublin South	210	15	35	160
	Wicklow	471	50	87	334
AREA 7		3248	147	275	2826
	Dublin South City	290	17	24	249
	Dublin South West	1005	52	83	870
	Dublin West	915	34	79	802
	Kildare/West Wicklow	1038	44	89	905
AREA 8		923	118	172	633
	Laois/Offaly	260	47	42	171
	Longford/Westmeath	30	4	9	17
	Louth	274	45	63	166
	Meath	359	22	58	279



AREA 9		2659	114	256	2289
	North Dublin	1773	58	135	1580
	Dublin North Centre	164	13	33	118
	North West Dublin	722	43	88	591
Total		9924	664	1119	8141

Actions to address AON waiting lists

The HSE's National Clinical Programme for People with Disability (NCPDP) 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 in July 2023.

Additional funding

Approximately €10.5m was spent in 2023 to address waiting lists for clinical assessments identified through the Assessment of Need process and in 2024, an additional €5m in one off funding has been allocated. This funding is being utilised to procure diagnostic ASD assessments from the private sector. The HSE at local level is also 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 the date of receipt of a completed AON application.

Targeted Initiative focussed on long waiting families

A new targeted waiting list initiative is in place and the Government has allocated funding of €6.89 million to facilitate the HSE to procure up to 2,500 additional AONs, with delivery targeted over the next 6 months. This funding is in addition to existing HSE core funding of the €5m mentioned above, allocated for procurement of private assessments.

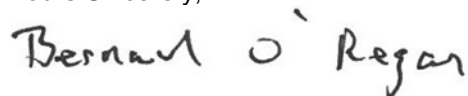
This waiting list initiative will target those families waiting longest for AONs, with the HSE reimbursing clinicians directly through the procurement of capacity from approved private providers. This provides a more equitable and fair approach rather than reimbursement of parents directly.

Funding has been allocated to each CHO area for the provision of Assessment of Need.

It is envisaged that this initiative will be progressed through the existing framework of providers procured by each CHO Area, while also seeking to expand the list with any new private provision.

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

