



**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.

25<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Deputy Pauline Tully,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [pauline.tully@oireachtas.ie](mailto: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: 26194/24**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if the procurement of private assessments for families long waiting an assessment of need, announced on 21 May 2024, has commenced; the process by which children are chosen to be assessed; and if parents can book a private assessment directly and have the cost reimbursed.*

**HSE Response**

The demand for assessments of need (AONs) under the Disability Act, 2005 has increased significantly in recent years, with a 25% increase in the number of applications for AON received in 2023 – from 6,775 in 2022 to 8,472 in 2023.

This growth has continued into 2024, with a further 2,603 received in Quarter 1 (569 up on same period last year). The total number of applications 'overdue for completion' at end of Quarter 1, 2024, 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) – which represents an increase of 115% on the end 2022 figure of 4,613.

The situation in relation to AON is not the same across the country. The number of applications in some areas has historically been significantly lower than in others. This may reflect differing service models, including early engagement with families as soon as practicable and support to access services without having to resort to the AON legal route. However, even in these areas, we are seeing an upwards trend in applications.

**Targeted Initiative focused on long waiting families**

A new waiting list initiative, launched in June 2024, 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.



All aspects of the Assessment of Need process must be operated within the AON legislation, the HSE SOP and the iHIQA standards.

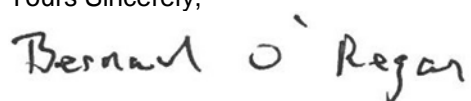
In line with appropriate procurement procedures, Garda vetting and due diligence practice, private providers are contracted by the HSE to provide assessments and / or interventions.

The HSE must ensure that the contracted providers are appropriately qualified and that any assessments or interventions are provided in line with the legislation, HSE SOP and the iHIQA standards.

Some families source private assessments to facilitate access to educational supports such as special schools or classes. In many cases, these are unidisciplinary assessments which are usually accepted in the education sector. In general, HSE or HSE funded services, in line with best practice guidelines, use a multidisciplinary approach to assessment, specifically to ASD assessment. In these circumstances, while HSE services may take cognisance of any unidisciplinary reports that may be available, they will undertake a multidisciplinary assessment where appropriate, to confirm a diagnosis and to determine the necessary interventions.

The HSE does not fund or reimburse any fees paid to private practitioners in any of the health service areas where assessments, interventions or therapies have been commissioned by the service user or their family directly.

Yours Sincerely,



**Bernard O'Regan**  
**Assistant National Director**  
**National Disability Team**

