



**Oifig an Stiúirthóir Cúnta Náisiúnta,**  
Foireann Míchumais Náisiúnta,  
An Chéad Urlár - Oifigí 13, 14, 15,  
Àras 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.

29<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Deputy Martin Browne,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [martin.browne@oireachtas.ie](mailto:martin.browne@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy Browne,

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: 22215/24**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the criteria that would enable parents of children in need of autism assessments to secure funding to avail of a private practitioner; the funding streams available to parents of children in need of a range of therapies that cannot be assessed through CDNT teams due to staffing shortages or lengthy waiting lists, to alternatively avail of the services of a private practitioner; if additional access to the private sector in these situations is being considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**HSE Response**

91 Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) are aligned to 96 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) across the country and are providing services and supports for children aged from birth to 18 years of age.

The CDNTs are currently providing services and supports for 45,741 children and strategies and supports for urgent cases on the waitlist where staffing resources allow. However, there are significant challenges for CDNTs including:

- Significant staffing vacancies
- Growth in numbers of children with complex need
- Growth in demand for Assessment of Need, diverting further resources away from interventions.

The HSE's Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 – 2026, Disability Services for Children and Young People, which was approved by the HSE Board and launched by the Government in October 2023, contains a robust suite of CDNT Retention and Recruitment targets, the majority of which are now in train.

The Roadmap is a targeted Service Improvement Programme to achieve a quality, accessible, equitable and timely service for all children with complex needs as a result of a disability and their families.



Based on the CDNT Staffing Census (Oct 2022), there are over 700 vacant whole time equivalent posts in CDNTs. The HSE continues to explore a range of options to enhance the retention and recruitment of essential staff across all aspects of the health services. The HSE is operating in a very competitive global market for healthcare talent as there are significant shortages of qualified healthcare professionals across the globe. The HSE Community Operations Disability Services is working collaboratively with the CDNT lead agencies at CHO level to promote CDNTs as a workplace of choice in a competitive employment market.

The Roadmap actions includes a robust suite of 60 actions, including 21 on CDNT Retention and Recruitment targets, and many of which are now in train.

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.

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.

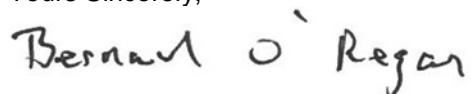
The HSE does not fund or reimburse any fees paid to private practitioners in any of the health service areas where assessments, interventions or therapies have been commissioned by the service user or their family directly

#### ***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).

Progressing the outsourcing of these assessments is challenging however, in this regard, Disability Services nationally is working with HSE Procurement to complete 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.

Yours Sincerely,



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

