



Oifig an Stiúirthóir 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.

5th February 2025

Deputy Alan Kelly,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: alan.kelly@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Kelly,

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: 46392/24

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of children waiting for an assessment of needs in Tipperary in 2023 and up to November 2024, in tabular form.

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 Disability Act outlines the statutory timelines under which Assessments of Need under the Act must be completed. In summary, the assessment report must be completed within 6 months of the date the application was received. While the HSE endeavours to meet its legislative obligations under the Act, it has struggled to achieve compliance with these timeframes. In 2024, 10.4% of assessments were completed within the timeframes set out in the Disability Act 2005 and accompanying Regulations.

The total number of applications 'overdue for completion' at end of 2024, now stands at 14,221 (including 618 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 60% on the end 2023 figure of 8,893. This is largely due to the following:

- A 26% increase in the number of applications for AON received in 2024 – from 8,472 to 10,690.
- A total of 4,162 AONs were completed in 2024.
- The judgement in the case of CTM & JA v the HSE March 2022 found that the Preliminary Team Assessment (PTA) approach described in the HSE's SOP for Assessment of Need did not meet the requirements of the



Disability Act. The HSE is now required to deliver diagnostic assessments where necessary and appropriate as part of the AON.

- The number of applications for AON under the Act has risen steadily since its implementation in June 2007, largely driven by the High Court ruling in 2009 which confirmed that eligibility for AON applies to persons born on or after 1st June 2002.
- The non-commencement of the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004). The number of children aged five and over, and in addition of school-going age, has risen steadily as a percentage of all applications received. **At the end of 2011, the figure stood at 26%, while throughout 2024, this figure averaged 67%.**

Please see the table below which gives the number of AON applications overdue at the end of Q4 2024 as extracted from the AOS (AON information management system). Table 2 further below gives the number of AON applications overdue at the end of Q4 2023.

Information pertaining to County Tipperary is highlighted below.

Table 1: Applications overdue for completion end of Quarter 4, 2024

CHO	LHO	Total Overdue ¹	Overdue/ Exceptional Circumstances ²	Overdue/ No Exceptional Circumstances
AREA 1		594	29	565
	Cavan/Monaghan	278	6	272
	Donegal	293	5	288
	Sligo/Leitrim	23	18	5
AREA 2		370	29	341
	Galway	179	29	150
	Mayo	149	0	149
	Roscommon	42	0	42
AREA 3		442	4	438
	Clare	62	0	62
	Limerick	221	4	217
	Tipperary N.R	159	0	159
AREA 4		1163	37	1126
	Kerry	57	0	57
	Cork North	306	8	298
	Cork North Lee	526	22	504
	Cork South Lee	226	4	222
	Cork West	48	3	45
AREA 5		573	47	526
	Carlow/Kilkenny	145	12	133
	Tipperary S.R	87	6	81
	Waterford	143	16	127
	Wexford	198	13	185
AREA 6		1513	137	1376
	Dublin South East	380	32	348
	Dublin South	348	30	318
	Wicklow	785	75	710
AREA 7		4635	2	4633
	Dublin South City	422	2	420
	Dublin South West	1395	0	1395
	Dublin West	1289	0	1289
	Kildare/West Wicklow	1529	0	1529
AREA 8		1738	143	1595
	Laos/Offaly	464	45	419



	Longford/Westmeath	54	0	54
	Louth	617	33	584
	Meath	603	65	538
AREA 9		3193	190	3003
	North Dublin	1937	126	1811
	Dublin North Centre	313	22	291
	North West Dublin	943	42	901
Total		14221	618	13603

Table 2; Applications overdue for Completion on 31st December 2023

CHO	LHO	Total Overdue ¹	Overdue/ Exceptional Circumstances ²	Overdue/ No Exceptional Circumstances
AREA 1		389	12	377
	Cavan/Monaghan	133	3	130
	Donegal	202	9	193
	Sligo/Leitrim	54	0	54
AREA 2		182	15	167
	Galway	103	8	95
	Mayo	62	7	55
	Roscommon	17	0	17
AREA 3		369	0	369
	Clare	45	0	45
	Limerick	201	0	201
	Tipperary N.R	123	0	123
AREA 4		780	20	760
	Kerry	38	1	37
	Cork North	178	8	170
	Cork North Lee	345	4	341
	Cork South Lee	193	4	189
	Cork West	26	3	23
AREA 5		398	28	370
	Carlow/Kilkenny	78	1	77
	Tipperary S.R	62	6	56
	Waterford	95	10	85
	Wexford	163	11	152
AREA 6		706	103	603
	Dublin South East	134	20	114
	Dublin South	186	22	164
	Wicklow	386	61	325
AREA 7		2843	2	2841
	Dublin South City	252	0	252
	Dublin South West	875	0	875
	Dublin West	809	1	808
	Kildare/West Wicklow	907	1	906
AREA 8		750	81	669
	Laois/Offaly	207	11	196
	Longford/Westmeath	41	1	40
	Louth	193	59	134
	Meath	309	10	299
AREA 9		2476	82	2394
	North Dublin	1716	61	1655
	Dublin North Centre	125	3	122



	North West Dublin	635	18	617
Total		8893	343	8550

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

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. 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.

Information received from the CHO Areas indicates that under this targeted initiative, 2,479 AONs have been commissioned from private providers/assessors from June to December, 2024 at a cost of €8,229,919. This suggests that the average cost per AON is €3,320.

	Number of AONs	Cost	Average Cost per AON
June	379	€1,245,455	€3,300
July	342	€1,155,703	€3,379
August	371	€1,173,031	€3,162
September	318	€1,080,993	€3,399
October	344	€1,174,933	€3,416
November	365	€1,155,168	€3,165
December	360	€1,244,636	€3,457
Total to date	2,479	€8,229,919	€3,320

However, despite this increased activity in relation to AON, the number of people overdue an Assessment of Need is growing as demand outstrips system capacity. In this regard, we anticipate that by the end of 2024, 19,559 AONs will be due for completion: AONs overdue at end of Q4 2024 (14,221); new AONs received in Q4, 2024 (2,838); 2,500 Preliminary Team Assessments carried out under the previous Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), an approach found by the High Court not to have met the requirements of the Disability Act.

The increased numbers of applications for Assessment of Need, which is a legal entitlement under the Disability Act 2005, is a reflection of the increase in population and of families exploring all options for accessing services for their child.

However, an AON is not required to access Primary Care, Children's Disability Services or Mental Health Services providing services including assessment, goals setting, intervention and follow up services. This direct access ensures more efficient and timely access for many families.

The situation in relation to AON is not the same in every area. The numbers of applications in some areas have historically been significantly lower than other areas. This reflects a service model used in those areas to engage with



families as soon as practicable and support them to access services without them having to resort to the Assessment of Need legal route.

This will be explored by the HSE in the context of the Roadmap for Service Improvement actions relating to Services Access and Improvement, with the objective to spread this good practice across all teams nationally, and rebalancing the demand for AON with CDNT Service Provision, including workshops with families and with staff on how this can be achieved.

Yours Sincerely,

Bernard O'Regan

Bernard O'Regan
Assistant National Director, National Disability Team

