



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
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Dear Deputy Smyth

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 42615/18**

*To ask the Minister for Health if early intervention can be granted for children that have no diagnosis but are on the assessment of need list waiting on a diagnosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

#### **HSE Response**

##### **The Assessment of Need Process**

Since the commencement of Part 2 of the Disability Act in June 2007 the Health Service Executive has endeavoured to meet its legislative requirements as set out in the Act. Under the Act, any child born on or after June 1st 2002, who is suspected of having a disability, is eligible to apply for an Assessment of Need. Children who qualify for an Assessment of Need under the Act have a right to:

- an assessment of their health needs arising from their disability
- an assessment report
- a statement of the services they will receive
- make a complaint if they are not happy with any part of the process

The Disability Act does not define this assessment and the process is not standardised across the country. This lack of standardisation and clarity has contributed to significant delays in the Assessment of Need process. In addition, the Assessment of Need, being an accumulative process, has resulted in resources being targeted almost exclusively towards assessment with some children receiving very limited intervention.

The HSE recognises that it faces significant challenges in respect of meeting the statutory time-frames which apply to the assessment of need process. While any delay in assessment or intervention for any child is not desirable, the assessment process under the Disability Act can take place in parallel with any intervention which is identified as necessary. The fact that a child is waiting for their assessment to be completed should not be interpreted as meaning that the child is necessarily waiting for necessary, identified interventions.

## **Revised Standard Operating Procedure for Assessment of Need (Disability Act, 2005)**

As required by the standards for Assessment of Need there should be a consistent approach to assessments across the country. A revised Standard Operating Procedure for Assessment of Need has been developed to ensure that there is a standardised approach to assessment across all areas. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure children with disabilities and their families, access appropriate assessment and intervention as quickly as possible. In addition, this procedure will ensure that the approach to Assessment of Need is consistent across all areas.

The Assessment of Need will comprise a Preliminary Team Assessment that will identify initial interventions and any further assessments that may be required. This assessment will usually be undertaken by a children's disability service that is also tasked with delivering intervention. While not required by the Act, diagnostic assessments will continue to be provided, as appropriate, and these will be captured in the child's Service Statement as part of the Assessment of Need process.

These changes will alleviate the current situation where children in some parts of the country may wait a number of years before they can access an assessment. During this period of time, they often have little or no access to intervention or support. It is intended that these changes will facilitate children with disabilities to access assessment in a more timely fashion.

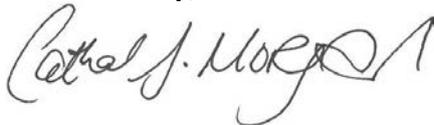
The Preliminary Team Assessment, (PTA) will provide sufficient information to determine whether or not the child meets the definition of disability in the Act. Where a child meets the definition he or she will then receive a service statement outlining services to be provided and the timeline for same. Children with less complex needs, who do not meet the definition and /or do not have a disability, can continue to access services through Primary Care.

Where necessary, following the PTA, a child will receive initial interventions while waiting further assessment. This is to deliver best practice standards of early intervention for children and represents a significant and positive change for children with a disability and their families.

It was intended that the SOP would be implemented from 30th April 2018. However, following discussions with a number of professional bodies and vocational groups, implementation of the procedure was deferred pending a further consultation process with clinicians and members of the Fórsa Trade Union.

The HSE is continuing to engage with vocational groups and professional bodies to address any concerns relating to the implementation of this SOP.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr. Cathal Morgan,  
Head of Operations - Disability Services,  
Community Operations**