



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

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24<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Deputy James Browne  
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Dublin 2.  
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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 15548/20

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of children at the end of June 2020 or the latest date available that were awaiting a first assessment from the HSE under the Disability Act 2005.*

#### HSE Response

It is acknowledged that the numbers of assessments overdue for completion remain high, although there had been some improvement in these figures in 2018 and 2019 prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Assessment of Need is reported on a quarterly basis, so the latest information available is end of Quarter 2 2020. Table 1 below provides the number of applications for Assessment of Need under the Disability Act that were overdue for completion on the last day of Quarter 2, 2020 broken down by CHO Area. The information is based on data extracted from the Assessment Officers' System Database (AOS). 5,533 applications are overdue for completion with 136 of these on the grounds of there being exceptional circumstances as provided for in paragraph 10 of the regulations.

#### Applications overdue for Completion

CHO	LHO	Total Overdue <sup>1</sup>	Overdue/ Exceptional Circumstances <sup>2</sup>	Overdue/ No Exceptional Circumstances
AREA 1		133	0	133
AREA 2		100	4	96
AREA 3		589	7	582
AREA 4		943	5	938
AREA 5		555	8	547
AREA 6		236	7	229
AREA 7		942	1	941
AREA 8		721	49	672
AREA 9		1314	55	1259
Total		5533	136	5397

<sup>1</sup>All assessment reports that were not completed within 6 months of application or within 3 months of Start Stage 2 and before the end of the quarter are included in this report.

<sup>2</sup>The number of Assessment Reports 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. Consent to extension is only valid if agreed extension date has not already passed.

## COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

In preparing for and responding to COVID-19 and to fully align with Public Health guidance as recommended via the NPHET, the HSE and its partner service providers put in place a range of measures, which included the prioritisation of vital residential and home support services whilst curtailing or closing certain services such as day services, as well as certain clinical supports in order to; a) prioritise essential public health services at CHO level and b) ensure continued delivery of the referenced residential and home supports provision. I should note that in the absence of regular access to some service and supports, CHOs and service providers have tried to maintain services that can be delivered safely; providing outreach and telecare solutions, using technology where possible; and using creative and innovative models of care to support service users, both adults and children.

While applications for Assessment of Need under the Disability Act continue to be accepted, the HSE acknowledges that during the current COVID-19 pandemic situation, it has not been possible for services to undertake clinical assessments while maintaining social distancing and meeting health and safety requirements. It has therefore, been difficult to complete the assessment within the statutory timelines.

## Roadmap for Reopening

Processes are underway in order to plan for the reintroduction of non-Covid services. In that regard the HSE has now developed a number of important guidance documents to assist disability services. These are now available on the link below and are as follows:

1. Framework for Resumption of Adult Day Services;
2. Reshaping Disability Services From 2020 & Beyond

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/>

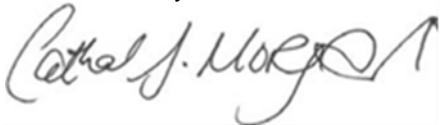
It is important to note that the above guidance is interim and subject to change in line with the overall management of the Covid-19 pandemic and in accordance with contemporary Public Health Guidance.

The HSE continues to plan the re-establishment of vital non-covid supports and services. This includes very careful and detailed work on the part of the Disability Sector with national guidance and will result in directing how all funded agencies can deliver services on a medium to long-term basis. Plans have to comply with guidance as set out by the National Public Health Emergency Team as well as Public Health specialists in the HSE.

In respect of Children's Disability Services, a national implementation group is being established to support the reform of these services as envisaged in PDS1 and through the establishment of 'Networks' (CDNs) by year end. This remains a key a priority commitment for the HSE and its Lead Agency Partners;

In addition the Disability Sector is re-establishing a number of structures including the National Consultative Forum as well as other operational structures that will co-ordinate and support the sector as we continue to navigate this pandemic and make every effort to deliver supports and services in line with Public Health Guidance.

Yours sincerely,



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

