



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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

Office of the Head of Operations,
Disability Services/Social Care Division,
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick.

T: 00353 (0) 61 483369
Suíomh Gréasáin/Website: <http://www.hse.ie>

22nd June 2020

Deputy Thomas Pringle,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: thomas.pringle@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Pringle,

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 10737/20

To ask the Minister for Health the number of children and adults with a diagnosis of autism; the age categories and geographical location of these persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

An extremely wide range of individual differences is represented within the Autistic Spectrum Disorder categorization, from individuals who also have a severe learning disability to those with average and above average intelligence. All share the triad of difficulties in reciprocal social interaction, communication, and a lack of flexible thinking. ASDs impact on all areas of functioning and have enormous implications throughout the lives of those affected across the entire ability range.

Disability services are provided based on the presenting needs of an individual rather than by the diagnosis of the individual or the actual type of disability or service required. Services are provided following individual assessment according to the person's individual requirements and care needs. Care and/or services provided are tailored to the individual needs and requirements of the child/adult with ASD.

The HSE does not gather information routinely on the basis of diagnosis. So, while we know from previous studies that approximately 70% of those with Severe /Profound Intellectual Disability will also have Autism, although many will not have been formally diagnosed, we are not currently able to provide detailed information on the numbers of children and adults who have a diagnosis of autism.

While the HSE does not maintain a central list on the basis of diagnosis, each Community Health Organisation Area would be aware of the presenting needs within each of the geographic areas.

Children who may be presenting with a possible Autistic Spectrum Disorder, can present either through; the Assessment of Need process under the Disability Act, 2005, through Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), or through Community Services.

For those children and young people with non-complex presentations, therapy services are provided through Primary Care Teams in Community Healthcare Organisations. For those with complex



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presentations (i.e. two or more disabilities), Therapy Services are provided by either Children's Disability Network Teams and/or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams (e.g., where a person with ASD also has a co-morbid mental health disorder).

Review of Irish Health Services for Autistic people.

The HSE is also implementing recommendations arising from the *Review of the Irish Health Services for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2018)*.

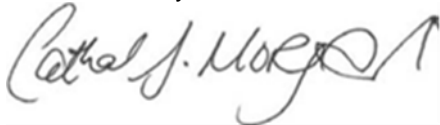
This programme of capacity building and public awareness has a budget of €2m of new investment specific to the needs of this vulnerable group.

In accordance with the National Service Plan, the additional funding secured will be used in a number of priority areas:

- To implement a programme of awareness raising that can provide a better information resource for children and parents about what supports are available;
- To deliver a campaign to assist in creating awareness of the challenges, needs and experiences of people with autism;
- To build capacity and competence amongst key professionals working with autism – including a national training programme for clinicians and the implementation of a tiered model of assessment in order to improve access to and responses by services for those with ASD.

The HSE's ASD Programme Board has begun work to implement the recommendations of the Review that includes a more streamlined clinical pathway for service users; collaborative working with parents; tiered assessment; more structured transition planning and ASD training for staff.

Yours sincerely,



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