



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/Community Operations,
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15th June 2020

Deputy Niamh Smyth,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House, Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
e-mail: niamh.smyth@oireachtas.ie

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 8310/20

To ask the Minister for Health the status of HSE waiting times for assessment of need for children with disabilities; the number of children waiting at present; the length of time they have been waiting in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

Applications for Assessment of Need under the Disability Act overdue for completion

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.

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 1, 2020 broken down by length of time overdue and by each CHO Area. The information is based on data extracted from the Assessment Officers' System Database (AOS). 5,083 applications are overdue for completion with 146 of these on the grounds of there being exceptional circumstances as provided for in paragraph 10 of the regulations.

Table 1.

CHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	149	63	26	60
AREA 2	112	33	42	37
AREA 3	598	82	121	395
AREA 4	879	119	124	636
AREA 5	468	30	49	389
AREA 6	217	39	47	131
AREA 7	751	60	105	586
AREA 8	677	76	95	506
AREA 9	1232	75	215	942
Total	5083	577	824	3682



Seirbhís Sláinte
Níos Fearr
á Forbairt

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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 NPHE, 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.

Under the governance of the HSE's National Integrated Operations Hub chaired by the COO and work relating to vulnerable people, Disability Operations has a team in place with the responsibility for providing supports and capacity building training for the sector. To date, a range of guidance material has been developed to support people with disabilities, families and staff including:

- Alternative Models of Care (Non-Residential)
- Frequently Asked Questions for People with Disabilities and Carers.
- Streamlined Health Passport for people with disabilities who are admitted to hospital
- Guidance on Use of PPE in Disability Services
- Guidance for supporting adults in a community residence/at home
- Guidance of supporting children in a community residence/at home
- Support coordination in a pandemic; practical checklist to avoid stressors for service users

For the full list of Guidance/Advice documentation, see the below web link which is the central repository for disability specific guidance material during the COVID-19 emergency.

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

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.

Since the publication of the Government's 'Roadmap for reopening Society & Business' as well as the 'Return to work safely' protocol, the HSE is finalising plans to re-establish 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.

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 also available on the above website and are as follows:

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

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;

CHOs and S38/39 agencies continue to work together at a regional level in order to plan and co-ordinate efforts.

With regard to therapy services, 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 Childrens 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**