



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,
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick.

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

22nd February 2021

Deputy Chris Andrews,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
e-mail: chris.andrews@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Andrews,

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 6968/21

To ask the Minister for Health the number of children under two and a half years of age nationwide and in the Dublin region that availed of early intervention from the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 7806/21

To ask the Minister for Health the breakdown of the number of children nationwide and in the Dublin region that availed of early intervention from the HSE by category (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Details Supplied: How many 0-1 year olds have been diagnosed with ASD by the HSE? How many 0-1 year olds are accessing ASD services (early intervention) provided by the HSE? How many 0-1 year olds are on waitlists to access a diagnosis or service provided by the HSE? How many 1-2 year olds have been diagnosed with ASD by the HSE? How many 1-2 year olds are accessing ASD services (early intervention) provided by the HSE? How many 1-2 year olds are on waitlists to access a diagnosis or service provided by the HSE? How many 2-3 year olds have been diagnosed with ASD by the HSE? How many 2-3 year olds are accessing ASD services (early intervention) provided by the HSE? How many 2-3 year olds are on waitlists to access a diagnosis or service provided by the HSE?

HSE Response

The HSE and disability service providers recognise the critical need and importance of disability supports for children with special needs and is very much aware of the importance of service provision, such as early intervention services for children and their families. The impact of COVID-19 on people's lives has and continues to be very significant. The HSE is also fully cognisant of the stress that waiting times for early intervention services can cause to families. Our collective aim is to restore services and ensure continuity of services in a safe way and in line with the very significant investment made by the State and funded agencies.

Children who may present with an 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.

In respect of those children applying for an assessment under the Disability Act 2005, the Act gives an individual with a disability the right to an assessment of their health needs. The intention of the Assessment of Need process is to identify the health needs resulting from the child's disability. It is a matter for clinicians, based on their experience and qualifications, to decide how best to evaluate the needs at the time of the child being assessed. The Act does not give

the right to a specific assessment at a particular point in time. Nor does it give a right to access to a diagnosis unless it is required at that time to identify the health needs occasioned by the disability.

The HSE records data, pertaining to the assessment of need process, under the Disability Act, 2005. The Act concentrates on identifying need and does not require diagnosis and the category of disability is only recorded where known. It should also be stressed that the Act currently only applies to those children born after 1st June 2002 and that not all eligible children apply for an assessment under the Act.

With regard to the request for information regarding the number of children under two and a half years of age nationwide and in the Dublin region that availed of early intervention from the HSE, unfortunately, this information is not available for Disability Services alone but gathered via Compstats nationally and thus, figures will include Primary Care and not extractable for this specific age group.

Additionally, because of unidisciplinary data collection, it is also possible that children are counted on more than one caseload for example Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy.

While waiting lists are collated nationally for individual therapy services such as Speech and Language, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, the numbers of children waiting for therapeutic intervention are not combined into one National Early Intervention waiting list.

A number of service improvements are being introduced that, when implemented, will help improve access to services for children with disabilities and developmental delays. The overall programme of improvement is the ongoing roll out of Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDS). The HSE is establishing a total of 91 Children's Disability Networks across the nine CHOs, each comprised of one specialist inter-disciplinary Children's Disability Network Team (CDNTs) to work with children aged from birth to 18 years with complex disability needs. This requires the reorganisation of all current HSE and HSE funded children's disability services into geographically-based CDNTs.

PDS is doing this by forming partnerships between all the disability organisations in an area and pooling their staff with expertise in the different types of disabilities to form the CDNTs. These teams will provide for all children with significant disability, regardless of their diagnosis, where they live or where they go to school.

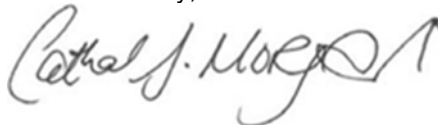
This reconfiguration of services under the Progressing Disability Services for Children & Young People (PDS) programme is in line with Health Service Reform and the implementation of Community Healthcare Networks under Sláintecare.

Developments in 2021

The HSE welcomes the recent announcements from the Government of additional funding for Disability Services:

- An additional €100 million secured for Disability Services in the recent budget. The specific breakdown of this investment will be discussed as part of the normal service planning process and will be detailed in the National Service Plan. However, the HSE anticipates that significant funding will be allocated for Early Intervention and School-aged Services, as well as the development of additional Respite Services and in-home intensive transitional support packages.
- €10 million is being made available to support the resumption of day services and enhanced home support services for disability service users.
- €20 million in one-off grants will be provided to reform disability services, build the capacity of disability organisations and to improve the quality of life of those who rely on these services.
- €7.8 million has been allocated by Sláintecare to facilitate the HSE and its funded service providers to address the overdue Assessments of Need for children and young adults with disabilities.

Yours sincerely,



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