



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>

1st February 2021

Deputy Neale Richmond,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
e-mail: neale.richmond@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Richmond,

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 2578/21

To ask the Minister for Health the measures in place to shorten the waiting list for children of additional needs to be assessed for supports; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

In respect of the provision of Disability Services and in the context of the Governments Resilience & Recovery Framework (2020 – 2021), the HSE regards the provision of disability services including Children's Disability Services as essential to maintaining a response to people with a disability.

Assessment of Need under the Disability Act (and the current scheme to eliminate overdue assessments) continues to be a priority.

In August 2020 the HSE secured €7.8m through Sláintecare to address overdue Assessments of Need. This funding was secured to address all AONs overdue at 30th June 2020. This funding provided a very welcome and timely opportunity to address AON backlogs as implementation of the Standard Operating Procedure for Assessment of Need and the reconfiguration of all children's disability services to Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) will ensure that further backlogs do not occur. Furthermore, the elimination of these waiting lists will support the new CDNTs to deliver child and family centred services in line with the PDS model.

Each Community Healthcare Organisation was required to formalise a plan to eliminate overdue AONs in their areas. These plans were to take a multifaceted approach comprising elements of the following:

- Restoration of relevant redeployed clinicians to children's disability services
- Waitlist initiative utilising existing clinicians working overtime at weekends or evenings
- Procurement of private assessments
- Commitment to filling maternity leaves
- Recruitment of Additional Clinical Staff for fixed term contracts of 6 months from 1/9/20

During the period from September to December 2020 each CHO area has done substantial work to address their overdue AONs in parallel to the on-going management of new applications for AON.

It is important to note that there are some challenges including:

- Staffing challenges associated with COVID-19
- Private providers struggling to deliver within agreed timelines
- Families' reluctance to attend for appointments in the context of COVID-19 infections and associated restrictions

Each CHO area has been asked to revise their original plans and targets from January. This work is on-going.

Progressing Disability Services

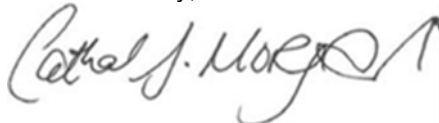
The HSE acknowledges the challenges in meeting the demand for children's disability services and is acutely conscious of how this impacts on children and their families.

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). 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.

The HSE is establishing a total of 91 Children's Disability Networks across each of the nine CHOs comprised of specialist inter-disciplinary Children's Disability Network Teams to work with children with complex disability needs. 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.

Yours sincerely,



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