

9th April 2021

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ ref 15355/21

“To ask the Minister for Health if an issue in relation to waiting times for a public autism assessment will be addressed (Autism assessment waiting times - Kerry); and if he will make a statement on the matter”.

Dear Deputy Healy-Rae,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

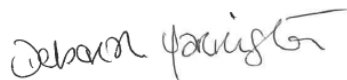
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare acknowledges the lengthy waiting times that parents are experiencing under the Assessment of Need process which result from the volume of applications received. Cork Kerry Community Healthcare received the highest volume of AON applications in the country in 2020. There has been both a national and local focus in 2018, 2019, 2020 and into 2021 in relation to addressing the numbers of children awaiting assessment. These efforts include staff working overtime to complete additional assessments, additional staff hired to clear the AON backlog and a number of assessments outsourced to private providers. This approach has been successful and will continue to yield a substantial increase in the number of assessments per month as we progress through 2021.

Kerry Intervention and Disability Services (K.I.D.S) are a Children’s Disability Network Team (CDNT) who aim to provide timely access to supports and appropriate interdisciplinary interventions to children with complex needs and disability. The Children’s Disability Network Team (CDNT) aims to provide an initial assessment and commence a needs based intervention plan for every child within 4 months of receipt of referral. This had been achieved prior to Covid-19, however since the pandemic, assessments and interventions have been delayed and children are now waiting longer for initial contact with the team.

Disability Services are aware there are vacancies within the teams due to maternity and sick leave etc. Based on the resumption of services plan HSE Disability Services are working closely with the Children's Disability Network Managers to ensure that the teams are working towards achieving the target of commencing their contact with each child within 4 months. It is important to stress that whilst children are waiting for ASD diagnostic assessments they are provided with appropriate intervention supports according to their identified needs.

I trust this clarifies the situation for you.

Yours sincerely



**Ms. Deborah Harrington,
A/Interim Head of Disability Services,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**

