



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Disability Service
South East Community Healthcare
Health Service Executive
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Ms. Verona Murphy TD
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin

PQ 22599/21

To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the present 30-month waiting time for disability Psychology Services in County Wexford; his plans to immediately address the lack of resources in the services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Murphy

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

I have reviewed the matter and the following is the current position.

There have been significant year on year increases in the number of children applying for assessments (including Autism Spectrum Disorder) and all disability services which led to delays in timeframes. It is acknowledged that given increased referral rates and demands for assessments and Disability Services, there is a requirement for additional resources to meet current demand and this has been included in the estimates for 2021. ASD assessments are multidisciplinary in nature and the service is experiencing an unprecedented demand for this service.

It should be noted that some of the children awaiting diagnostic assessment may already be in receipt of other HSE services or may have received some component of the assessment. If referred separately to other disciplines, for example Speech and Language (SLT), may already be in receipt of SLT intervention, but would also remain on the multidisciplinary assessment waiting list. In addition some children may also have received intervention from Primary Care Psychology or National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS). The length of the ASD assessment list is a combination of a rise in the demand for assessments, these are multidisciplinary and the waiting list is impacted by the availability of other disciplines to co-facilitate the assessments.

The Psychology Department are reaching the priority work which are children who are awaiting cognitive assessment before they move to National School and are prioritizing the information sessions provided to parents post confirmed ASD diagnosis.

Currently we are in the process of changing the delivery of services where we are moving from a model of all children being referred to and seen by individual disciplines to a model where a child with a complex disability will be referred to and have their service delivered by a Children Disability Network Team (CDNT).

Children with non-complex needs will receive their service through Primary Care. In May/June 2021 parents will be contacted by letter to advise them if their child will receive services through primary care (individual disciplines) or a CDNT.

On the 30th of June the CDNT's will be established and following this date the team members will contact families already known to services to identify their goals for their child and to develop a plan for them. Children who are on a waiting list for services will be assigned to a team waiting list and will be contacted by the team to discuss their child's needs and goals with them and to create a plan. Any queries regarding Primary Care waiting lists may be addressed to the individual department.

The HSE regrets the difficulties in accessing multidisciplinary assessments for ASD and seeking to reduce the waiting times and address issues arising for all children and their families through a number of measures including:

- Ongoing efforts to advocate for additional resources/posts.
- The HSE continues to fill approved posts in line with the HSE Recruitment and National Pay Bill Management Framework
- Joint submission between Primary Care and Social Care – disability for National waiting list initiative funding to address the ASD waiting list.

In line with public health guidance, at the outset of the pandemic, these services along with many other services, were significantly reduced to limit exposure to COVID-19. At this time the HSE are reviewing best practice, based on Public Health guidelines to resume assessments.

I trust this information is of assistance to you. Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Ms. Anne Ennis
Head of Service, Disability Services
South East Community Healthcare