



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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Mr. Johnny Mythen TD  
Dail Eireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin

**PQ 24086/21**

**To ask the Minister for Health the immediate plans that are in place to deal with the severe waiting lists for Autism Spectrum Disorder assessments in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Mythen

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 their 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 children who are awaiting cognitive assessment before the move to National School and are prioritising the information sessions provided to parents post confirmed ASD diagnosis.

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:

- 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,



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