



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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29th November 2021

Deputy David Cullinane,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: david.cullinane@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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 56226/21

To ask the Minister for Health the number of adults and children on assessment of needs waiting lists by CHO for each quarter since quarter 4 2018, in tabular form; the number of those waiting more than 12, 24 and 52 weeks respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

Since the Disability Act commenced in June 2007, the HSE has endeavoured to meet its legislative obligations under the Act. However, as a consequence of a High Court ruling of December 2009, the effect of which was to open eligibility to all children born after 1st June 2002, the number of children aged five and over, and in addition of school-going age, has risen steadily as a percentage of all applications received. At the end of 2011, the figure stood at 26%, while throughout 2020, this figure averaged 54%. This is a reflection that the AON process is an accumulative process in terms of numbers of children seeking access. However, it is acknowledged that the numbers of assessments overdue for completion remain high.

The Tables below in Appendix 1 provide the number of applications for Assessment of Need under the Disability Act that were overdue for completion on the last day of the quarter (from quarter 4, 2018 to Quarter 2, 2021), broken down by CHO Area. The latest information available is based on Quarter 3, 2021 figures, as highlighted below. The information is based on data extracted from the Assessment Officers' System Database (AOS).

Activity for the year (up to end Quarter 3) indicates that there has been significant progress in the number of Assessment of Need reports completed during the year, 6,204 by end of September. This has led to a significant reduction in the total number of applications 'overdue for completion', which now stands at 2,720 (excluding those applications for which an extended time-frame was negotiated with the parent on the grounds of there being exceptional circumstances as provided for in paragraph 10 of the regulations). The increase in activity to date in 2021 can be attributed to the additional funding allocated to the AON process via Slaintecare. This has been utilised to provide additional assessments through a range of options including overtime for existing staff and private procurement.



Building a Better Health Service

CARE COMPASSION TRUST LEARNING

Applications overdue for Completion

CHO	Overdue	Overdue/ Exceptional Circumstances	Overdue/ No Exceptional Circumstances	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	25	16	9	11	6	8
AREA 2	10	1	9	6	3	1
AREA 3	41	8	33	10	5	26
AREA 4	758	22	736	93	108	557
AREA 5	107	12	95	25	19	63
AREA 6	65	0	65	28	19	18
AREA 7	899	1	898	124	118	657
AREA 8	157	12	145	50	39	68
AREA 9	845	115	730	113	145	587
Total	2907	187	2720	460	462	1985

¹All assessment reports that were not completed within 6 months of application or within 3 months of Start Stage 2 and before the end of the quarter are included in this report.

²The number of Assessment Reports for which an extended time-frame was negotiated with the parent on the grounds of there being exceptional circumstances as provided for in paragraph 10 of the regulations. Consent to extension is only valid if agreed extension date has not already passed.

Overall Reform of Children's Disability Services

The Disability Act requires the HSE to provide a consistent approach to Assessments of Need across the country. The HSE acknowledges that this has not been the case and that approaches to assessment and waiting times have varied.

To help address this situation, the HSE has implemented a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Assessment of Need process to ensure that;

- children with disabilities and their families access appropriate assessment and intervention as quickly as possible
- the approach to Assessment of Need is consistent across all areas.

In line with this procedure, an Assessment of Need will include a Preliminary Team Assessment that will identify initial interventions and any further assessments that may be required. This preliminary assessment will usually be undertaken by a children's disability service that are also tasked with delivering intervention. While not required by the Act, diagnostic assessments will continue to be provided, as appropriate, and these will be captured in the child's Service Statement as part of the Assessment of Need process.

These changes are intended to alleviate the current situation where children in some parts of the country may wait a number of years before they can access an assessment. During this waiting period, they often have little or no access to intervention or support. It is intended that the changes in the SOP, particularly the new preliminary assessment, will facilitate children with disabilities to access assessment in a timelier fashion.

The HSE believes that the implementation of this SOP and the planned reorganisation to Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs), will have a positive impact on the lives of the children and young people who require our services.

The recent allocation of €7.8 million through Slaintecare to address overdue Assessments of Need will further support the HSE and its funded service providers to meet the legislative timelines for Assessment of Need.

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.

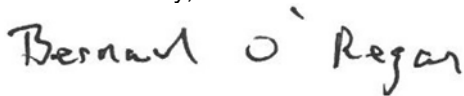
The HSE is establishing a total of 91 Children's Disability Networks across each of the nine CHOs comprised of specialist inter-disciplinary Children's Disability Network Teams to work with children with complex disability needs. This reconfiguration of services under the Progressing Disability Services for Children & Young People (PDS) programme is in line with Health Service Reform and the implementation of Community Healthcare Networks under Sláintecare.

Since 2019, 285 development posts have been allocated to children's disability services across the country. This includes 100 posts allocated under the HSE National Service Plan 2021. 185 development posts were allocated to children's disability services across the country in 2021. These posts have been assigned based on a number of factors, including the existing ratio of staff to the number of children with disabilities in each area.

In June 2021, the Minister of State for Disabilities confirmed that the HSE should progress the recruitment of 85 whole time equivalent (wte) posts to facilitate the provision of in-reach services to those special schools that have heretofore provided a school based service. These staff members will be employed as part of the new CDNTs and will report to the Children's Disability Network Manager. CHOs must ensure that the allocation of any posts to CDNTs are targeted towards providing appropriate interventions.

Services in most parts of the country have now reconfigured to CDNTs. The remaining teams will be established before the end of 2021, thereby all 91 CDNTs will be in place and delivering services at that time.

Yours sincerely,



Bernard O'Regan
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations

Appendix 1 - Applications overdue for Completion, from Quarter 4, 2018 to Quarter 2, 2021

Quarter 4, 2018

CHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	141	6	10	125
AREA 2	39	4	14	21
AREA 3	309	33	81	195
AREA 4	1030	89	130	811
AREA 5	403	12	41	350
AREA 6	105	11	29	65
AREA 7	476	41	74	361
AREA 8	517	47	68	402
AREA 9	689	54	150	485
Total	3709	297	597	2815

Quarter 1, 2019

CHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	103	15	4	84
AREA 2	44	12	16	16
AREA 3	352	52	76	224
AREA 4	978	69	123	786
AREA 5	404	18	13	373
AREA 6	117	18	28	71
AREA 7	478	33	54	391
AREA 8	473	49	57	367
AREA 9	737	63	156	518
Total	3686	329	527	2830

Quarter 2, 2019

CHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	72	5	13	54
AREA 2	46	19	13	14
AREA 3	372	49	97	226
AREA 4	905	85	126	694
AREA 5	401	9	23	369
AREA 6	157	33	39	85
AREA 7	500	46	96	358
AREA 8	454	50	82	322
AREA 9	861	85	170	606
Total	3768	381	659	2728

Quarter 3, 2019

CHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	58	5	11	42
AREA 2	66	34	20	12
AREA 3	433	90	108	235
AREA 4	889	123	133	633
AREA 5	419	23	44	352
AREA 6	166	28	51	87
AREA 7	559	62	102	395
AREA 8	535	81	105	349
AREA 9	975	78	169	728
Total	4100	524	743	2833

Quarter 4, 2019

CHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	79	16	18	45
AREA 2	72	21	30	21
AREA 3	524	87	132	305
AREA 4	889	110	129	650
AREA 5	469	30	56	383
AREA 6	191	28	36	127
AREA 7	680	58	124	498
AREA 8	652	88	149	415
AREA 9	1088	87	189	812
Total	4644	525	863	3256

Quarter 1, 2020

CHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	149	63	26	60
AREA 2	112	33	42	37
AREA 3	598	82	121	395
AREA 4	879	119	124	636
AREA 5	468	30	49	389
AREA 6	217	39	47	131
AREA 7	751	60	105	586
AREA 8	677	76	95	506
AREA 9	1232	75	215	942
Total	5083	577	824	3682

Quarter 2, 2020

CHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	133	27	42	64
AREA 2	100	26	35	39
AREA 3	589	59	121	409
AREA 4	943	81	170	692
AREA 5	555	41	81	433
AREA 6	236	41	65	130
AREA 7	942	76	164	702
AREA 8	721	47	143	531
AREA 9	1314	100	186	1028
Total	5533	498	1007	4028

Quarter 3, 2020

CHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	138	15	29	94
AREA 2	91	14	19	58
AREA 3	587	39	82	466
AREA 4	1031	84	157	790
AREA 5	625	11	75	539
AREA 6	262	13	58	191
AREA 7	1095	52	168	875
AREA 8	714	37	111	566
AREA 9	1515	83	222	1210
Total	6058	348	921	4789

Quarter 4, 2020

CHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	27	3	4	20
AREA 2	51	7	6	38
AREA 3	434	16	21	397
AREA 4	994	38	91	865
AREA 5	461	13	14	434
AREA 6	218	8	11	199
AREA 7	1023	33	43	947
AREA 8	574	34	28	512
AREA 9	1296	58	54	1184
Total	5078	210	272	4596

Quarter 1, 2021

CHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	5	1	1	3
AREA 2	18	7	5	6
AREA 3	192	4	10	178
AREA 4	903	71	94	738
AREA 5	251	17	5	229
AREA 6	91	16	14	61
AREA 7	735	65	82	588
AREA 8	292	36	44	212
AREA 9	1016	65	51	900
Total	3503	282	306	2915

Quarter 2, 2021

CHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1	19	9	9	1
AREA 2	21	14	3	4
AREA 3	127	29	16	82
AREA 4	997	104	181	712
AREA 5	158	9	16	133
AREA 6	99	30	33	36
AREA 7	936	95	197	644
AREA 8	186	40	44	102
AREA 9	1066	109	179	778
Total	3609	439	678	2492