



**Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,**  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
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9<sup>th</sup> April 2022

Deputy Mark Ward,  
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Dublin 2.  
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Dear Deputy Ward,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following parliamentary questions, which were submitted to this department for response.

**PQ 15107/22**

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of children that had a standard operation procedure assessment rather than a comprehensive assessment of needs since the procedure was introduced in total and per CHO area; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**PQ 15108/22**

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of children that received actual therapy, that is, speech and language, occupational, psychology since they received the standard operation procedure assessment in total and per CHO area; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**PQ 18707/22**

*To ask the Minister for Health if the children with disabilities who received a preliminary team assessment instead of an assessment of needs will be called back for an assessment of need in compliance with the Disability Act 2005; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**HSE Response**

Children requiring services such as Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Psychology access these services through Primary Care Teams or through Children's Network Disability Teams (CDNTs). Most children will access these services through primary care while those with more complex needs access services through CDNTs.

Also, importantly, children do not require an Assessment of Need under the Disability Act to access these therapies and many children on these caseloads have not gone through the AON process..

HSE Disability Services does not gather data on services provided through other service areas such as Primary Care.

The HSE's Standard Operating Procedure for Assessment of Need (SOP) was implemented for all new applications for AON from 15th January 2020. In line with this procedure, Stage 2 of the Assessment of Need process, comprised a Preliminary Team Assessment to identify initial interventions and any further assessments that may be required. Since then approximately 10,000 Preliminary Team Assessments have been completed.



The recent judgement of Ms Justice Phelan in the High Court directed that the Preliminary Team Assessment approach does not fulfil the requirements of the Disability Act. The judgement states that a diagnosis is required to determine the nature and extent of a person's disability. The implications of any ruling from the Court of Appeal will be considered as soon as this becomes available.

The HSE will implement a process over the coming weeks for a revised approach to Assessment of Need. In developing this, the HSE will include a wide range of stakeholders, including families, providers, staff and representative bodies, in an intensive consultation to develop a pathway for AONs that seeks to comply with the requirements of the Act but also protects the commitment to the provision of intervention and principles as set out above.

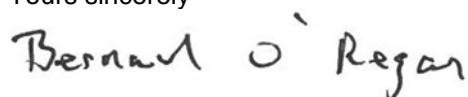
Assessment of Need reports will no longer be issued on the basis of a Preliminary Team Assessment and the HSE will engage directly with the families of those who received a PTA to establish if they wish to receive a further assessment under the terms of the Disability Act. Where appointments have already been scheduled with children, these will form the first step in their AON process. The HSE remains committed to the delivery of appropriate services for children with disabilities and will work with families and staff to develop services that meet their needs.

Figures for 2021 indicate that 4,951 Preliminary Team Assessments were provided under the terms of the SOP during the year. While this data indicates that there is substantial variation in outcomes across the 9 CHO areas, 86% of children are being referred for intervention on the basis of their PTA. This represents a significant improvement in the pathway to intervention for children and their families. Only 54% of children who received a Preliminary Team Assessment in 2021 were identified as requiring further assessment. This requirement did not delay their access to intervention. This cohort of children will be prioritised for completion of their AONs.

	Total PTA Activity 2021				
	No. of PTAs completed	No. referred for intervention	% referred for intervention	No. referred for further Ax	% referred for further Ax
CHO1	366	356	97%	309	84%
CHO2	132	130	98%	121	92%
CHO3	375	242	65%	330	88%
CHO4	554	542	98%	252	45%
CHO5	139	138	99%	84	60%
CHO6	207	155	75%	111	54%
CHO7	1407	1300	92%	551	39%
CHO8	719	490	68%	411	57%
CHO9	1052	884	84%	511	49%
	<b>4951</b>	<b>4237</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>2680</b>	<b>54%</b>

The HSE are reviewing the files of all children who received a preliminary team assessment to establish what additional assessments will be required to meet the requirements of the Act. Plans to address these needs will be finalised in the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely



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

