



3rd March 2022

Ms Mary Lou McDonald, TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Email: marylou.mcdonald@oireachtas.ie

PQ ref 8902/22

The number of complaints received in each of the years 2016 to 2022 regarding the failure to carry out an assessment of need in line with standards in each CHO Dublin north city and county; and the number of complaints that were upheld in tabular form.

PQ ref 8905/22

The number of assessment officers who are currently assigned to process assessment of need applications for CHO Dublin north city and county.

PQ ref 8906/22

The number of clinical assessment officers are currently assigned to process assessment of need applications for CHO Dublin north city and county.

PQ ref 8907/22

The number of staff who are currently specifically tasked with processing assessment of need applications for CHO Dublin north city and county.

PQ ref 8908/22

When an audit was last undertaken to ascertain the data regarding the assessment of need process in CHO Dublin north city and county; the number of children with a disability; the total number of staff; and the additional CHO requirements.

PQ ref 8909/22

The measures being taken to address the reported increase in the rate of children diagnosed with a disability and the subsequent increased demand for assessment of need and recommended support services in CHO Dublin north city and county; the additional resources that have been allocated to the area; the engagement that has taken place with the regional services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ ref 8910/22

The measures being taken to address the challenges identified with the volumes of referral for assessment of needs in CHO DNCC which are stated to be among the highest in the State.

PQ ref 8911/22

The measures that are being taken to address the challenges identified with the recruitment and retention of staff in the disabilities sector in CHO Dublin north city and county.

PQ ref 8912/22

The measures that are being taken to address the significant waiting lists for therapeutic interventions in CHO



Dublin north city and county.

PQ ref 8913/22

The roles that are currently filled and the vacancies that are unfilled within the children's disability network team servicing CHO Dublin north city and county in tabular form

PQ ref 8914/22

The number of new applications received for an assessment of need in CHO Dublin north city and county in October, November and December 2021 and January 2022

PQ ref 8915/22

The current number of overdue assessments of need on hand in CHO Dublin north city and county as defined by the Disability Act 2015; the number of these applications that are at stage 1; and the number that are at stage 2.

PQ ref 8916/22

The number of post-2021 model preliminary team assessment model applications for an assessment of need that are on hand in CHO Dublin north city and county at stage 2.

Dear Deputy McDonald,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you with information in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions which you submitted for response. I considered it may be best to respond to your questions collectively. I have examined the matters and the following outlines the position.

The Disability Act 2005 provides for a dedicated complaints and appeals procedure which is available if a parent/guardian is not satisfied with the Assessment of Need (AON) or Service Statement. It also provides a process for dealing with complaints about access, for people with a disability. Figures in relation to complaints received are held nationally by the Disability Complaints Officer who can be contacted at aon.complaints@hse.ie

The Assessment of Need (AON) portfolio comprises a small group of staff dedicated to the very busy AON Office across Community Healthcare Organisation Dublin North City and County (CHO DNCC). There are at time of writing 3.8WTE Assessment Officers in CHO DNCC. The Assessment Officers (AOs) are supported by 3WTE Clerical Officers (Grade III)

There are 1.8WTE Liaison Officers (LOs) assigned to facilitate completion of Service Statements as per the Disability Act 2005.

Stage 2 AON, Preliminary Team Assessments (PTAs) are completed by the 12 Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) in CHO DNCC. There are no dedicated resources within CHO DNCC that are assigned solely for completing PTAs. The CDNTs are responsible for completion of PTA referrals within their Network and referrals of PTAs to CDNTs are allocated on a monthly basis by the Children's Disability Network Managers based on capacity within each CDNT.

An audit of AON waiting lists was carried out nationally in 2019/2020 and following same a significant amount of once off additional funding was made available to each CHO to address the waiting lists for AON. This initiative commenced and was largely delivered in CHO DNCC amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic and an unprecedented HSE cyber-attack. A much lesser number of AONs are pending completion at this time and are all assigned to clinical persons for assessment. There is ongoing monitoring through both local and national systems in relation to numbers of applications received, numbers of assessments completed within timelines at the various stages of assessment, numbers of referrals and monitoring of waiting lists.



CHO DNCC manage available resources and respond to challenges that may arise at the various stages of the AON process. CHO DNCC typically receive between 1,500 and 1,800 AON referrals annually. Each Stage 2 PTA, which is completed by the clinical staff on CDNTs, range in time from 7hrs to 12hrs or longer in some cases where additional supports may be required.

The number of new applications received for an assessment of need in CHO DNCC in October, November and December 2021 and January 2022:

- Oct 2021 = 128
- Nov 2021 = 135
- Dec 2021 = 100
- Jan 2022 = 121

The current number of overdue assessments of need on hand in CHO DNCC as defined by the Disability Act 2015 and the number of these applications that are at stage 1; and the number that are at stage 2 are outlined below:

- Overdue at Stage 1 = 1
- Overdue at Stage 2 = 524

Breakdown of Old Sop/PTA:

- Old SOP Overdue at Stage 1 = 0
- PTA Overdue at Stage 1 = 1
- Old SOP Overdue at Stage 2 = 242
- PTA Overdue at Stage 2 = 282

Total Number of PTA applications on hand = 611.

The Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT) were established in CHO DNCC on 20th September 2021. It is a very significant change programme with a new model of service which focuses on outcomes for children and families rather than inputs. An inter-disciplinary team will work with each family to develop an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and support children and parents to reach goals identified on the plan. The focus is on the goals that children and families may meaningfully aim to achieve at home and steps they may take together with the Children's Disability Network Team rather than the number of sessions of therapies like speech and language or occupational therapy received.

There are, at the time of writing, circa 3,100 children with disabilities open to the 12 CDNTs and circa 3,000 children awaiting CDNT services in CHO DNCC, however this number changes regularly due to movement within the population, change in circumstances and other factors. The open case numbers do not comprehend the workload of PTAs referred earlier as this process is recorded differently via national metrics. The staff allocation for each CDNT varies based on caseload and contributing factors such as work with special schools and other matters. The staff allocation is not commensurate with staff in post due to the very significant recruitment and retention challenges across Disability Services at this time. The HSE and the Lead Agencies, St Michael's House (SMH), Avista (formerly Daughters of Charity Disability Support Services) and the Central Remedial Clinic (CRC) are utilising any availability within the private sector to conduct assessments but again this is a market which is limited and is reaching maximum capacity.



CHO DNCC Disability Services have significant concerns regarding our current waiting lists for some CDNT services. We are constantly exploring all options available to us to address these waiting lists to improve the access to services for children and their families. We are acutely aware of the high demand for services in our CHO. This demand for services is caused by a number of factors, including but not limited to population growth anticipated to be validated in the 2022 Census, coupled with some vulnerable population groups and areas of deprivation.

Disability Services is a highly regulated sector, with services required to comply with legislative obligations as well as numerous policy documents which require implementation. CDNTs are mandated to comply with the provisions of the Disability Act 2005 and this must be their priority when providing services. However as a consequence of this and working with limited resources, staff are spending a significant amount of time conducting assessments which reduces capacity to for therapeutic interventions.

As Head of Service Disability I chair a CHO DNCC Governance Group overseeing CDNTs, and this group is exploring if there are any alternative staff grades or qualifications which may assist staff in CDNTs whilst they navigate the significant change within service delivery. The level of staff vacancies is not easily resolved as there are essentially more posts for Allied Health Professionals than qualified staff available nationally. The teams are also experiencing high levels of maternity leave. We have increased the level of administrative support to CDNTs in an effort to ensure clinical staff capacity is maximised. In this regard and in an effort to mitigate the risk, I have agreed with the CEOs of the Lead Agencies to approve the backfill of maternity leave which is not resourced within the allocated budget and Inter Agency Agreement for delivery of children's services in CDNTs. The Head of Human Resources in CHO DNCC has commenced a recruitment and retention working group with Lead Agency Human Resource Leads and a number of initiatives including a stand at the Jobs Fair in the RDS March 2022, advertising campaigns out of state, increase in senior posts where possible are in train and ongoing. Staff training opportunities is integral to retention initiatives, flexible working arrangements and a focus on staff Health and Well- Being initiatives among other interventions form part of significant efforts to promote recruitment and retention and highlight the value of staff in the Disability sector.

CHO DNCC Disability Services were allocated circa 39WTE additional posts during 2021 for CDNTs and AON, however as you will note the vacancy rates at this time supersede the additional allocation.

The HSE and the Lead Agencies, St Michael's House (SMH) Avista and the Central Remedial Clinic (CRC) are utilising any availability within the private sector to support assessments but this is a market which is limited and is reaching maximum capacity.

Data in relation to the number of vacancies was collected in October 2021 and is due for return in late March 2022 again. I will endeavour to provide an update in late April 2022.

I assure you that we are continuing to work towards improved access to services with a focus on rolling out universal and targeted care pathways for children and families on waiting lists including developing webinars, group-based workshops and information sessions for children and families and development of a repository of online resources for children and their families to promote and enable wellbeing at home.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Olive Hanley'.

Ms Olive Hanley
Head of Service for Disability