



Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,
31-33 Sráid Chaitríona, Luimneach.

Office of the Head of Operations,
Disability Services/Social Care Division,
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick.

T: 00353 (0) 61 483369

Suíomh Gréasáin/Website: <http://www.hse.ie>

8th March 2022

Deputy Mark Ward
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: mark.ward@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Ward

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 9601/22

To ask the Minister for Health the process to get tested for a young adult who believes they are on the autism spectrum.

HSE Response

As present, the pathway for adult assessment for autism is based on the presentation to the individuals GP, and then onward referral to adult psychology in Primary Care or the Multidisciplinary Adult Disability Team, if one exists.

Disability services are provided based on the presenting needs of an individual rather than by the diagnosis of the individual or the actual type of disability. Services are provided following individual assessment according to the person's individual requirements and service needs.

It is acknowledged however, that the current system is very variable across the country and does not adequately serve the needs of adults with autism. In many areas adult assessments are only available privately, this is an unsatisfactory situation and we are working to address this. This work takes two specific forms. First, there has been a Task Group established under the National Clinical Programme for People with Disability to design improvements in adult disability services generally. This group is a multi-stakeholder group with lived experience representation. Secondly, and more specifically related to autism, a Service Improvement Programme for the Autistic Community has been commenced. This has two work streams:

1. Assessment and Pathway Working Group:

The Assessment and Pathways working group aims to develop a Standardised Assessment approach for use in all services dealing with the assessment of those with Autism to ensure that every assessment is of an acceptable and agreed standard, regardless of which service is being accessed. In addition it seeks to agree a standardised service user journey and the implementation of a



consistent core service offering across those providing services to people with Autism, including adults.

The Working Group, including people with lived experience of autism, has consulted widely with key stakeholders in the design and formulation stage of the project; this is particularly important in the context of the implementation of a tiered approach to assessment.

Its main work focus has been to:

- Agree an operational model for a tiered approach to Autism Assessment through developing clear and functioning pathways to services.
- This will contribute to the National Clinical Programme for People with Disabilities (NCPD) producing a Model of Service (including initial and ongoing assessment) for people with Autism, with appropriate sign off through the governance procedures of the NCPD.
- An implementation plan to include training which takes cognisance of existing policies of the HSE
- Social Care/Primary Care/Mental Health Policy Training material to support the agreed approach to Autism Assessment
- The development, where required, of processes or supporting protocols to underpin

A draft document which sets out the assessment protocol for both children and adults is being piloted in three CHOs (2, 7 & 9). It will then be evaluated to inform the further iteration and development of the protocol.

2. Awareness Working Group:

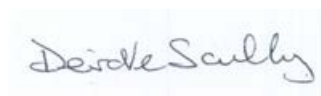
The Report of the Review of the Irish Health Services for Individuals with Autism showed that the information available to the Autistic community, Family Members, Carers and Service providers was limited, and inconsistent from region to region and did not always reflect current understanding and approaches. The HSE, through the work of the Awareness Working Group have taken a comprehensive approach to addressing this, and is reviewing existing content, seeking the views of the Autistic Community, Family Members, Carers and Service Providers on this content, and working to ensure it can be produced and made accessible to people all over the country, online and in print. This quality process has been progressing and will continue into next year.

The Awareness Stream of the programme is designed to respond to the call for greater clarity amongst Clinicians and Service Providers regarding both Autism and the supports available to people with Autism.

- There are a number of individuals with the lived experience participating in this group.
- The availability of comprehensive accessible information relating to Autistic people, their families, and healthcare workers working in the field
- The development of an online knowledge hub combined with a helpline aimed at providing contemporary information in relation to :a) location and types of services, b) tools and resources for service users, their families and clinicians and c) signposting to other essential community, voluntary and statutory based supports and services.

The outputs from this work will have wider application and benefits across all disability services

Yours sincerely



Deirdre Scully
AND Change Planning and Delivery, Disability and Mental Health Service

