



**Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,**  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
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22<sup>nd</sup> July 2022

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Dear Deputy Tully,

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: 39100/22**

*To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting for an assessment of need in Ireland; the number who have been waiting less than 3, 3-6, 6-12 and the more than 12 months broken down in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

**HSE Response**

Since Part 2 of 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 2021, this figure averaged 53%. 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.

A High Court judgement delivered on 11th March 2022 has impacted on the completion of assessments since that date. As a consequence of the judgement, Assessment Officers cannot complete assessments based on the agreed Preliminary Team Assessment format. As a result, activity for the second quarter of 2022 indicates that there has been an increase in the total number of applications 'overdue for completion', which now stands at 2,447 (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 requirement to provide diagnostic assessments under the terms of the Act for children who applied for their AONs between January 2020 and December 2021 will further impact on compliance in the coming months.

The most recent information regarding the number of children and young persons on waiting lists for an assessment of need is given in the Table below.



## Applications overdue for completion - End of Quarter 2 2022

| CHO          | Overdue <sup>1</sup> | Overdue/<br>Exceptional<br>Circumstances <sup>2</sup> | Overdue/ No<br>Exceptional<br>Circumstances | <1 month   | 1 - 3<br>Months | >3<br>Months |
|--------------|----------------------|---|---|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| AREA 1       | 156                  | 5   | 151   | 31         | 65              | 60           |
| AREA 2       | 48                   | 1   | 47  | 7          | 28              | 13           |
| AREA 3       | 87                   | 0   | 87  | 45         | 35              | 7            |
| AREA 4       | 587                  | 64  | 523   | 38         | 73              | 476          |
| AREA 5       | 123                  | 1   | 122   | 15         | 22              | 86           |
| AREA 6       | 115                  | 1   | 114   | 13         | 49              | 53           |
| AREA 7       | 452                  | 0   | 452   | 108        | 157             | 187          |
| AREA 8       | 236                  | 2   | 234   | 42         | 74              | 120          |
| AREA 9       | 727                  | 10  | 717   | 66         | 214             | 447          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>2531</b>          | <b>84</b>   | <b>2447</b>                                 | <b>365</b> | <b>717</b>      | <b>1449</b>  |

<sup>1</sup>All 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.

<sup>2</sup>The 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.

The HSE are continuing to review the files of all children who received a preliminary team assessment and engaging directly with families to establish what additional assessments will be required to meet the requirements of the Act. Additional funding has been secured to support the additional assessments required.

The HSE's Clinical Programme for People with Disability in cooperation with Community Operations, Disability Services will implement a process over the coming weeks for a revised approach to Assessment of Need. In developing this clinical guidance, the HSE has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including families, service 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.

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.

Yours sincerely



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

