



21st March 2022

Mr. Johnny Mythen T.D.
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 12967/22

To ask the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting an ASD assessment in County Wexford; the average waiting in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Mythen,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which was submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

I have reviewed the matter and the following is the current position.

There have been significant year on year increases in the number of children applying for assessments (including Autism Spectrum Disorder) and all disability services which has led to delays in timeframes. It is acknowledged that given increased referral rates and demands for assessments and Disability Services, there is a requirement for additional resources to meet current demand. Additionally in line with public health guidance, at the outset of the pandemic, these services, along with many other services, were significantly reduced to limit exposure to Covid-19 which has impacted on waiting lists.

Under the new Progressing Disability Services children with non-complex needs will be offered services through Primary Care and children with complex needs will be offered services through the Children's Disability Network Teams. The current focus of the newly formed CDNTs (set up on 27th September 2021) is establishing the new model of service delivery based on Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP), this is alongside meeting high priority urgent needs of children. Specific child and family goals are identified at the IFSP which may indicate a need for a specific intervention from OT or SLT.

The number of children waiting in County Wexford prior to the reconfiguration of services was 445 and this number is likely to increase.

As with other areas all disability services within CHO SECH are experiencing significant recruitment challenges to Children's Disability Network Teams. CHO SECH Disability Services share the concern regarding waiting lists for children's disability services. I can confirm that SECH CHO5 has received additional posts for Children's Disability Services to help address long waiting times. As well as approving 9 new posts across SECH in 2021 the HSE has approved 26 new posts for SECH in 2022. The HSE are actively recruiting to fill these posts along with trying to fill current vacancies which will enable teams to increase the provision of assessment and intervention.



The HSE regrets the difficulties in accessing multidisciplinary assessments for ASD and seeking to reduce the waiting times and address issues arising for all children and their families through a number of measures including:

- The HSE continues to fill approved posts in line with the HSE Recruitment and National Pay Bill Management Framework
- Waiting list validation is in operation with a particular focus on those who are waiting longest.
- Due to the lengthy waiting list funding has been secured to outsource assessments privately across SECH and there is active engagement with procurement to progress this.

We are acutely aware of the high demand for services in our CHO and the impact of delays in accessing services has on the children and their families. In the meantime, the Children's Disability Network Managers are exploring different ways to offer support to children and families currently waiting to access services. SECH has recently secured additional funding to address the ASD waiting list via outsourcing to private providers and we are engaging with procurement to progress this.

I assure you, my team and I will continue to work towards improved access to services with a focus on rolling out universal and targeted care pathways for children and families.

I trust this information is of assistance to you. Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Ennis".

Anne Ennis
Head of Service – Disability Services
South East Community Healthcare