



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>

9th September 2022

Deputy Martin Browne,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: martin.browne@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Browne,

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 43568/22

To ask the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting an appointment with a children's disability network team in County Tipperary; the number of children on assessment of needs waiting lists, broken down by discipline; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 43569/22

To ask the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting a preliminary team assessment and a subsequent multi-disciplinary assessment, by age and by children's disability network team; and if he will make a statement on the matter

HSE Response

The National Policy on Access to Services for Children & Young People with Disability & Developmental Delay ensures that children are directed to the appropriate service based on the complexity of their presenting needs i.e. Primary Care for non-complex functional difficulties and Children's Disability Network Teams for complex functional difficulties.

Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs)

In 2021, the remainder of ninety-one multidisciplinary CDNTs were established to provide services and supports for all children with complex needs within a defined geographic area.

Work is ongoing on mapping specialised services and supports, and paediatric supports available and gap analysis for children with highly complex needs in order to develop standardised approaches to integrated pathways of support for CDNTs and Primary Care staff.

Children and their families will have access to the full range of services and supports of the CDNT according to their individual needs. This includes universal, targeted and specialist supports, such as individual therapeutic intervention and access to specialist consultation and assessment when needed. Supports will be provided as is feasible in the child's natural environments - their home, school and community.



National Information Management System for the CDNTs (CDNTIMS)

Historically the number of children waitlisted for children's disability services provided by section 38 and section 39 providers has not been available nationally. The establishment of CDNTs will facilitate the collection of this data. A National Management Information System for all 91 CDNTs is in development and when implemented, will provide current data on waiting lists and other details for all CDNTs. In the interim, manual data collection is on-going and will provide information to the local areas regarding the number of children waiting for each CDNT.

The data provided in table 1 below shows the number of children that are waiting for an initial contact with a CDNT in the 9 CHO Areas: Data for CHO 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 represents end of May activity; Data from CHO 5 is for end April; and CHO 8 for end March 2022.

Information on North Tipperary is included in CHO 3 data and South Tipperary is included in CHO 5 data.

Please note that the CDNTs do not collect activity data by individual discipline (such as SLT, Physiotherapy, OT etc) as this does not align with the interdisciplinary model of care. In this context, discipline-specific data is not available.

Please also note that this is an interim dataset as we await the roll out of the National Information Management System and some individual CDNTs indicate that they do not have a system in place to capture this level of activity, therefore there are gaps in data returns for some of the CHO Areas.

Table 1

Status Report - June 2022	CHO1	CHO2	CHO3	CHO4	CHO5	CHO6	CHO7	CHO8	CHO9
No. of children waiting 0-3 months for an initial contact @ month end	116	273	281	224	56	163	212	398	142
No. of children waiting 4-6 months for an initial contact @ month end	115	803	201	224	247	140	233	1047	162
No. of children waiting 6-12 months for an initial contact @ month end	88	599	250	606	1001	262	752	372	435
No. of children waiting over 12 months for an initial contact @ month end	422	-	340	1892	0	507	1484	1229	2159

Assessment of Need

The Disability Act (2005) provides for an Assessment of Need (AON) that outlines the health and education needs for people born on or after 1st June 2002 who are suspected of having a disability. The HSE receives approximately 6,000 applications for these assessments each year.

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.

The HSE's Standard Operating Procedure for Assessment of Need (SOP) was implemented for all new applications for AON from 15th January 2020. This SOP included a standardised approach to assessment which was described as a Preliminary Team Assessment. Since then, approximately 10,000 Preliminary Team Assessments have been completed.

Activity for 2021 indicates that there was significant progress in the number of Assessment of Need reports completed during the year, 8,353 by year end. This led to a significant reduction in the total number of applications 'overdue for completion'

The judgement of Ms Justice Phelan in the High Court delivered on 11th March 2022 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.



As a consequence of the judgement, Assessment Officers cannot complete assessments based on the HSE's Preliminary Team Assessment format. This has impacted significantly on the numbers of AONs overdue for completion.

Table 2 below gives the most recent information regarding applications overdue for completion – at end of Quarter 2, 2022. Discipline specific data is not available as this does not align with an interdisciplinary model of care. Information on North Tipperary is included in CHO 3 data and South Tipperary is included in CHO 5 data

Table 2
Applications overdue for completion - End of Quarter 2, 2022

CHO	Overdue ¹	Overdue/ Exceptional Circumstances ²	Overdue/ No Exceptional Circumstances	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 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
Total	2531	84	2447	365	717	1449

¹All 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.

²The 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 standardised Preliminary Team Assessment approach, as defined in the SOP, is no longer being utilised to fulfil our obligations under the Disability Act 2005. Pending the completion of clinical guidance for Assessments of Need, clinicians have been advised to use their clinical judgement to determine the level and type of assessment required.

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 National Clinical Programme for People with Disability (NCPD) has led the process of developing Interim Clinical Guidance to replace the Preliminary Team Assessment. This new Interim Clinical Guidance has now been clinically approved and legal advice is awaited to confirm its compliance with the Disability Act (2005). The approach to assessment has to be designed in a manner which is clinically appropriate, prior to legal advice being sought.

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

