



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

**Office of the Head of Operations,**  
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21<sup>st</sup> April 2023

Deputy Holly Cairns,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [holly.cairns@oireachtas.ie](mailto:holly.cairns@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy Cairns,

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: 16509/23**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth his views on providing temporary funding assistance to the families of children on waiting lists for children's disability network teams to get an assessment of need through a regulated and registered private provider.*

**HSE Response**

Children can be referred directly to CDNT services without requiring an Assessment of Need as defined by the Disability Act (2005). The Children's Disability Network Manager in consultation with the CDNT members will determine the appropriate assessment or intervention pathway for each child. This may include a diagnostic assessment.

The Assessment of Need process is set out in the Disability Act, 2005. The aim of an Assessment of Need under the Disability Act is to identify whether a person has a disability, the nature and extent of the disability, any health and education needs arising from that disability, as well as what services are required to meet those needs.

The numbers of applications for AON under the Act have risen steadily since its implementation in June 2007. 6,755 applications for AON were received in 2022. This was the highest number of applications received in any year since Part 2 of the Act was 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 persons born after 1st June 2002 who are suspected of having a disability, 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 2022, this figure averaged 55%. This is a reflection that the AON process is an accumulative process in terms of numbers of children and young people seeking access.

On occasion and in line with appropriate procurement procedures, Garda vetting and due diligence practice; private providers are contracted by the HSE to provide assessments and / or interventions. In such instances, the HSE ensures that the contracted providers are appropriately qualified and that any assessments or interventions are provided in line with the appropriate standards.



Some families source private assessments to facilitate access to educational supports such as special schools or classes. In many cases, these are unidisciplinary assessments. In general, HSE or HSE funded services, in line with best practice guidelines, use a multidisciplinary approach to assessment, most commonly for ASD assessment. In these circumstances, while HSE services may take cognisance of any unidisciplinary reports that may be available, they will undertake a multidisciplinary assessment where appropriate, to confirm a diagnosis and to determine the necessary interventions.

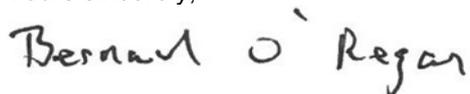
The HSE does not reimburse any fees paid to private practitioners in any of the health service areas where assessments have been commissioned by the service user or their family.

Approximately €11m has been allocated to address waiting lists for clinical assessments identified through the Assessment of Need process. This funding will be utilised to procure diagnostic ASD assessments from the private sector. A successful procurement process will facilitate the Children's Disability Network Teams to focus on the provision of intervention for children on their caseloads.

The capacity of the domestic market to provide the necessary skilled clinicians for direct employment or the procurement of private assessments is extremely limited. As a result, the HSE is exploring the potential to progress a large scale international procurement process to secure significant numbers of diagnostic ASD assessment.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernard O'Regan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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

