



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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20th July 2023

Deputy David Cullinane,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: david.cullinane@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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 35101/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth to outline the number of children with a disability and who had an assessment of need carried out privately where the cost of the private assessment was paid for by the HSE in 2022 to date in 2023; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 35102/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth to outline the number of children with a disability who availed of a service privately where the cost of the private service was paid for by the HSE in 2022 and to date in 2023; and if he will make a statement on the matter

HSE Response

Private providers are currently being 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, appropriate procurement procedures, Garda vetting and due diligence practice.

Parents may refer their children directly to Primary Care or to Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT) by completing the relevant referral forms. A GP referral is required for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, (CAMHS). Parents do not need to provide any professional reports to access health services. When families have reports available from health, social care or education professionals, these will be considered by the services. This will include where appropriate, consideration of the outcome of the assessment, the assessment tools used and the professionals involved in the assessment.

Some families source private assessments to facilitate access to educational supports such as special schools or classes. In many cases, these are unidisciplinary assessments which are usually accepted in the education sector. In general, HSE or HSE funded services, in line with best practice guidelines, use a multidisciplinary approach to assessment, specifically to 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.



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. In addition, the HSE at local level uses time related savings from time to time to source AON assessments privately for children in the order as registered on the AOS (AON information management system).

At present, the HSE does not fund or 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 directly as this would undermine the principle of equity of access for all children based on individual need.

With regard to the numbers of Assessments of Need commissioned by the HSE with private providers, the CHO areas are at various stages of engagement with private providers for the provision of AON.

Progressing the outsourcing of these assessments is challenging due to a number of factors, including:

- The lack of availability of suitable Private Providers;
- The limited capacity of the Private Sector to deliver assessments due to recruitment issues;
- Variations in costs quoted by Private Providers - Some tenders received by the CHOs are price prohibitive and there are often additional costs, particularly if a cognitive assessment is required, such as school observations, travel costs etc;
- The location of the Private Provider - In some situations, it is not possible or advisable for a child to travel to private providers;
- The provision of ASD assessments through Private Providers can be challenging in terms of meeting deadlines, completing reports, responding to correspondence etc.

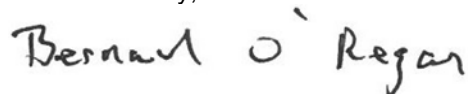
However, in this regard, Disability Services nationally is working with HSE Procurement to develop a tender process and Service Specification for the delivery of Assessment of Need from private providers. A successful procurement process will facilitate the CDNTs to focus on the provision of intervention for children on their caseloads.

In order to streamline the AON process across Primary Care and CDNT services at CHO level, the HSE has set up 4 Regional Hubs to undertake AON Assessments with a further 2 in development

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.

It is important to note that children do not require an Assessment of Need as defined by the Disability Act (2005) in order to access a CDNT service. They can be referred by a healthcare professional or parent/carer to the CDNT for children with complex needs as a result of their disability, or to Primary Care for children with non complex needs.

Yours sincerely,



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