



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

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6th September 2023

Deputy Michael Lowry,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: michael.lowry@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Lowry,
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: 36409/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if he will outline the governance structure of the new regional assessment of need teams; how many of these teams are or will be composed entirely of staff from the private sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ: 36410/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth if he will outline the total budget allocated for the regional assessment of needs teams; how many children are projected to have their assessments of need completed by these regional teams by the year-end; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

The HSE is committed to the delivery of appropriate services for children with disabilities and works with families and staff and a wide variety of Service Providers to develop services that meet their needs.

The Disability Act (2005) provides a legislated right to 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, but does not include a legislated right to service provision as an outcome of that AON.

The numbers of applications for AON under the Act have risen steadily since its implementation in June 2007. 7,612 applications for AON were received in the most recent 4 quarters (Q3, 2022 – Q2 2023). This was the highest number of applications received in any 12 month period 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.

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.

In line with appropriate procurement procedures, Garda vetting and due diligence practice, 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.

Additional funding

Additional funding has been secured to support the delivery of additional assessments, including those procured from the private sector.

Approximately €11m has been allocated to address waiting lists for clinical assessments identified through the Assessment of Need process. This funding is being utilised to procure diagnostic ASD assessments from the private sector.

Progressing the outsourcing of these assessments is challenging 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 parallel, a large scale international procurement process is also being progressed.

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

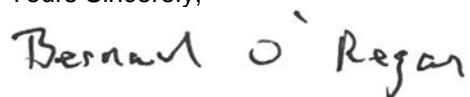
Regional Assessment Hubs

Six Regional AON Administrative Hubs are now in place in order to streamline AON processes ensuring maximum efficiencies and equity of demand across all areas. One area has established an AON Diagnostic Hub, reassigning some posts from CDNTs in order to address high demand for AONs. A second CHO is in the process of developing an AON Diagnostic Hub which also incorporates the CHO's Assessment Officer, Liaison Officer and Admin WTEs onto the team for optimal efficiency. As mentioned above, approximately €11m has been allocated to address waiting lists for clinical assessments identified through the Assessment of Need process. This includes the funding for the Regional Assessment Hubs.

With regard to governance structures, under the Disability Act 2005, the Health Service Executive holds the responsibility and governance for the Assessment of Need under the Disability Act 2005.

The Regional Assessment Hubs report to the Community Health Care Areas (CHOs) wherein they are located.

Yours Sincerely,



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

