



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

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19th July 2023

Deputy Roisin Shortall,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: roisin.shortall@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Shortall,

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 34748/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth further to Parliamentary Question No. 529 of 20 June 2023, his views on the fact that when healthcare professionals refers a child to a children's disability network team, this does not automatically result in the child being added to the assessment of need waiting list, thus denying that child a legal right to an assessment within the statutory timeframe; his views on whether this is morally and ethically correct, given that in many cases parents do not understand that the list they are on does not have the same legal protections as the assessment of need list; 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 and Developmental Delay ensures that children are directed to the appropriate service based on the complexity of their presenting needs rather than based on diagnosis. Many children and adults with a disability who have support needs can be effectively supported within mainstream child and adult health services. This policy provides a single point of entry, signposting parents and referrers to the most appropriate service (Primary Care for non-complex functional difficulties and Children's Disability Network Teams for complex functional difficulties).

Children do not require an Assessment of Need as defined by the Disability Act (2005) in order to access a Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT) service. A healthcare professional or parent/carer can refer children with complex needs as a result of their disability to the CDNT, or to Primary Care for children with non-complex needs.

Children referred by parents or professionals to CDNT or Primary Care services are not added to the AON waiting list under the Disability Act 2005. Children with complex needs and their families awaiting CDNT targeted supports, including assessment and interventions, are offered evidence informed universal strategies based on individual needs and available staffing resources.



Assessment of Need under The Disability Act (2005)

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. A referral to a Children's Disability Network Team for routine assessment and intervention does not in any way infringe on this legislative right to an AON as outlined.

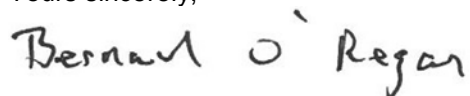
The numbers of applications for Assessment of Need under the Act have risen steadily since its implementation in June 2007. 6,755 applications for AON were received in 2022. This was the highest number of applications received in any year since Part 2 of the Act was commenced in June 2007.

This is a reflection that the AON process is an accumulative process in terms of numbers of children seeking access.

5,899 applications for AON were received in 2021 and 8,353 AONs were completed. As evidenced in the graph above, this was the highest number of completed assessments since Part 2 of the Act was commenced in June 2007.

A revised AON Standard Operating Procedure incorporating guidance on completion of clinical assessment will be shortly launched.

Yours sincerely,



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