

4th July, 2023

Mr Denis Naughten, TD.,
Dáil Eireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 29388/23

"To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of assessment of need assessments that have been outsourced by the HSE to private providers in CHO4 in 2022 and 2023; the cost of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. "

Dear Deputy Naughten,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth for response.

Children and young people born on or after 1st June 2002 who are suspected of having a disability can apply for an Assessment of Need (AON) under the Disability Act (2005). The Act allows for an assessment of the child's health needs. The assessment of need process consists of two stages, the first stage involves a review of the referral to the assessment of need process by an Assessment Officer which is an administrative process. It is a combined desktop and information gathering exercise carried out by an Assessment Officer to include receiving an application, acknowledging its receipt, ensuring the application is completed in full, checking the child's eligibility, requesting additional reports or information from the parents if they were not supplied with the application.

If appropriate, the child is then referred to stage two of the process, which is for a clinical assessment to determine what a child's needs are in relation to assessments and intervention.

We have been significantly challenged in terms of the volume of applications for assessment of need for a number of years now. Initiatives in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and into 2023 have sought to address a non-compliance in respect of the requirement under the Disability Act to assess and determine a disability (or otherwise) within a pre-determined timeline. Additionally, all of the agencies in this area, who are providing assessments and interventions, are experiencing very high volumes of referrals and as a consequence of same, they are holding wait lists both for assessments and for interventions. The level of need far exceeds the resources available.

The numbers referred for assessment in Cork Kerry Community Healthcare are among the highest in the country. To assist with a reduction of waiting times for ASD assessments additional funding has been provided in 2022 and 2023 by outsourcing to private providers. I can advise that for the 2022/ 2023 period a total of 663 assessments have been outsourced at a cost of €614,202.11.

If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Ms. Patricia O'Neill,
A/ Head of Disability Services,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare.

