



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

Office of the Head of Operations,
Disability Services/Social Care Division,
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick.

T: 00353 (0) 61 483369
Suíomh Gréasáin/Website: <http://www.hse.ie>

4th April 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 question, which was submitted to this department for response.

PQ: 13009/23

To ask the Minister for Health the process by which applications for funding for assistive technology for people with disabilities are assessed; which State body is responsible for assessing applications; the makeup of persons within the appointed body that make decisions; the current waiting times for decisions on assessments to be reached; what appeal options may be available following refusal; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

The use of technology in healthcare is well established and prior to Covid -19 had been increasingly viewed by both health care providers and service users as an important tool in supporting the way that health services will need to change in the future in order to be sustainable.

The population of people with disabilities and older people is growing and technology is also developing at a great speed. Assistive Technology, when used appropriately, has the potential to support people with disabilities to exercise their human rights and become more active members of society.

Assistive technologies are increasingly being used by people with disabilities to enable them to have more choice and control and live 'ordinary lives in ordinary places'.

Currently no single entity has sole responsibility for assessing applications.

The process for application for Assistive Technology support is broadly through three sectors:

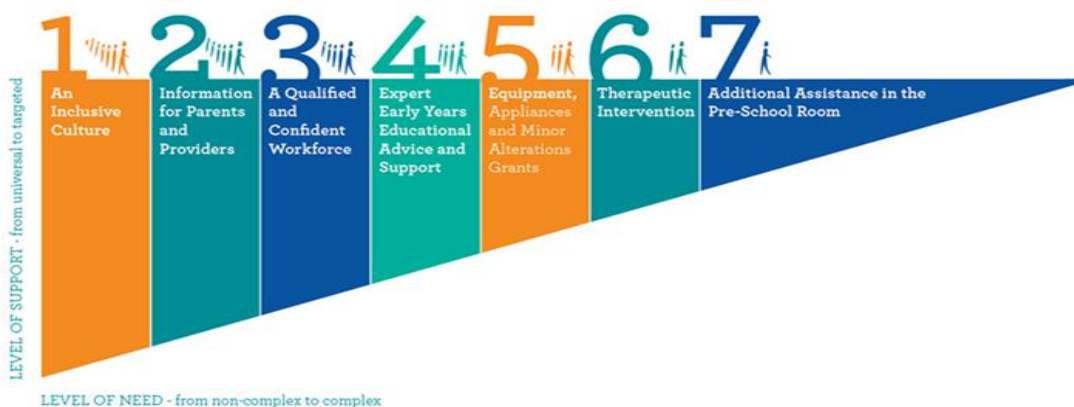
- Health: Aids and Appliances, Community Funded Schemes in Primary Care. This process varies between the Community HealthCare Areas (CHOs). Some CHOs have RAGs (Resource Allocation Groups). Most committees meet to assess applications and consist of therapy staff i.e- Occupational Therapists and Speech and language Therapists. (See further Information below)



- Education: through the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) at Primary level. At Preschool level, it is through the Access and Inclusion Model through Tier 5: Equipment and Appliances. (See Graphic Below – Number 5.)
- Employment/Social Protection: (Intreo Case Officers assess applications). Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant (Private Sector only). Public sector employers are expected to fund AT within own resources.

Access and Inclusion Model

A Model to Support Access to the Free Pre-School Year for Children with a Disability.



As stated above, there is currently not one specific central national body with responsibility for assessing applications and information / statistics are not collated centrally.

Each of the above funders undertakes the application, assessment and decision process independently.

Health Services

There are a variety of aids and appliances provided through community funded schemes and these products play a key role in assisting and supporting service users to maintain every day functioning. Supply of aids and appliances usually involves a qualified health care professional assessing an individual's needs and making a clinical recommendation on the supports required to enhance their daily living. Decisions relating to the approval of aids and appliances are based on a number of criteria including clinical need, demand, General Medical Service's eligibility, compassionate grounds, Long Term Illness eligibility, priority listing, resource availability or a combination of these criteria. In general, the eligibility for aids and appliances conforms to those for other health services, set out in the Health Act 1970.

The Aids and Appliances Service Improvement Group have published a national list of aids and appliances and prescribing criteria on the HSE website. This sets out clear prescribing criteria to assist prescribers in evidence based decision making. This is available from the following webpage:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/2/primarycare/community-funded-schemes/aids-and-appliances/>

The waiting time for Aids and Appliances is dependent on the particular piece of equipment that is being requested. As there are many and varied items provided to service users who are living with different medical conditions and or disabilities impacting with varying degrees of severity on the individual service users, there is no single wait time.

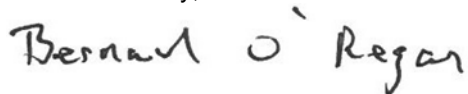
For many standard stock items, and critical urgent items the wait time from clinical assessment and approval to service user receiving the item can be one day to no more than one to two weeks throughout the country.



These longer waiting times are normally associated with the time required to arrange a suitable delivery time with the service user and their family/carer. For bespoke and more complicated items, the wait time is longer. This is largely dictated by manufacture and deliver lead-in times, resource availability and the risk assessment scoring for the individual service user.

The budget and management of aids and appliances is devolved to the local Community Healthcare Organisations (CHO's) and as such, they have their own processes in place for the management of these products and services. Given the thousands of different devices and equipment that are provided, there is variation in the precise criteria and processes that are used for any particular piece of equipment. As such, more detailed information including the appeal process for any particular service or product is best addressed to the local CHO or health centre who are providing same.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernard O'Regan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

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

