



**Oifig an Cheannaire Oibríochtaí,**  
Na Seirbhísí Míchumais/An Rannán Cúram Sóisialta,  
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28<sup>th</sup> March 2023

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Dear Deputy O’Riordan,

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: 13062/23**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the current waiting times for psychological assessments of need for children in the public system per CHO, in tabular form.*

**HSE Response**

Clarification was received that information is requested regarding the Primary Care waiting lists for psychology assessments and Assessments of Need under the Disability Act 2005.

**The National Access Policy**

The National Policy on Access to Services for Children & Young People with Disability & Developmental Delay ensures that children are directed to the appropriate service based on the complexity of their presenting needs i.e. Primary Care for non-complex functional difficulties and Children’s Disability Network Teams for complex functional difficulties.

**Primary care**

With regard to the current waiting times for psychological assessments, HSE Disability Services does not gather data on services provided through other service areas such as Primary Care.

However Primary Care Operations has compiled the latest available waiting list data, on services for which they collate data, for the end of January 2023 for those aged 0 to 17 years and 11 months.

- Table 1 in the Appendix includes the data for Psychology - Number of 0-17 years & 11 months old Patients waiting for treatment January 2023.

**Assessment of Need (AON) under the Disability Act 2005.**

The Disability Act (2005) provides for 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.



The numbers of applications for AON 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.

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 children born after 1st June 2002, 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 seeking access.

Assessments of Need under the Disability Act 2005 are multidisciplinary assessments.

There was a requirement for Psychology Services in 53% of the AONs under the Disability Act 2005 carried out in Quarter 4, 2022.

There are 4,613 applications for an Assessment of Need under the Disability Act 2005 that are overdue at year end 2022. Therefore, we can extrapolate that 53% of these Assessments of Need under the Disability Act 2005 may indicate a requirement for psychology services.

The judgement of Ms Justice S Phelan in the case of CTM & JA v the HSE found that the Preliminary Team Assessment approach described in the HSE's Standard Operating Procedure for Assessment of Need does not meet the requirements of the Disability Act. This judgement in effect requires the HSE to deliver diagnostic assessments where necessary and appropriate as part of the Assessment of Need process. This ruling has a significant impact operationally and has resulted in a growth in the numbers of overdue Assessments of Need. The requirement for services to prioritise the statutory Assessment of Need process will also impact significantly on their capacity to provide necessary intervention / treatment for children with disabilities.

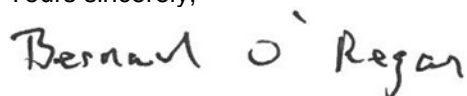
The HSE is continuing to review the files of all children who received a preliminary team assessment and engaging directly with families to establish what additional assessments will be required to meet the requirements of the Act. Additional funding has been secured to support the additional assessments required. Some assessments have been procured from the private sector and further procurement is planned.

The HSE's National Clinical Programme for People with Disability (NCPD) has led the process of developing Interim Clinical Guidance to replace the Preliminary Team Assessment. This new Interim Clinical Guidance has now been clinically approved and will be implemented following approval by the Department of Health.

The HSE is committed to the delivery of appropriate services for children with disabilities and working 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 to access health services and parents may refer their child directly to their local Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT).

Yours sincerely,



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



Appendix:

Primary Care Services

Psychology - Number of 0-17 years & 11 months old Patients waiting for treatment January 2023											
CHO Area	0 - 4 Yrs 11 Months					5 - 17 Yrs 11 Months					TOTAL
	0 - ≤ 12 weeks	>12 weeks - ≤ 26 weeks	>26 weeks but ≤ 39 weeks	>39 weeks but ≤ 52	> 52 weeks	0 - ≤ 12 weeks	>12 weeks - ≤ 26 weeks	>26 weeks but ≤ 39 weeks	>39 weeks but ≤ 52	> 52 weeks	
CHO1 Total	7	26	24	9	11	67	178	138	101	181	742
CHO2 Total	49	21	39	20	40	126	133	158	129	511	1,226
CHO3 Total	37	28	11	12	1	114	52	60	23	14	352
CHO4 Total	76	74	51	47	81	247	326	436	332	1,609	3,279
CHO5 Total	39	55	15	10	8	300	317	179	121	178	1,222
CHO6 Total	7	7	3	2	0	28	18	17	16	21	119
CHO7 Total	35	63	40	57	115	154	260	310	276	1,334	2,644
CHO8 Total	84	40	32	13	5	358	333	212	135	42	1,254
CHO9 Total	96	154	86	37	103	265	258	279	180	775	2,233
National Total	430	468	301	207	364	1,659	1,875	1,789	1,313	4,665	13,071

