



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

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9th May 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 20409/23

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth further to Parliamentary Question No. 200 of 22 March 2023, in relation to the €11 million that has been allocated to address waiting lists for clinical assessments identified through the assessment-of-need process, if it is possible to apply to receive funding for a private assessment under this allocation for a child on a waiting list; if so, the process by which one can do this; if not, if it is the case that the HSE will identify a private provider and refer children to them without a request from the child's parent or guardian; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

The Assessment of Need process is set out in the Disability Act, 2005. The aim of an Assessment of Need under the Disability Act is to identify whether a person has a disability, the nature and extent of the disability, any health and education needs arising from that disability, as well as what services are required to meet those needs.

The numbers of applications for AON under the Act have risen steadily since its implementation in June 2007. 7144 applications for AON were received in the most recent 4 quarters (Q2, 2022 – Q1 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.



Approximately €11m has been allocated to address waiting lists for clinical assessments identified through the Assessment of Need process. This funding will be utilised to procure diagnostic ASD assessments from the private sector. A successful procurement process will facilitate the Children's Disability Network Teams to focus on the provision of intervention for children on their caseloads.

In line with appropriate procurement procedures, Garda vetting and due diligence practice; private providers are 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.

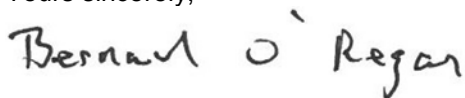
Some families source private assessments to facilitate access to educational supports such as special schools or classes. In many cases, these are unidisciplinary assessments. In general, HSE or HSE funded services, in line with best practice guidelines, use a multidisciplinary approach to assessment, most commonly for ASD assessment. In these circumstances, while HSE services may take cognisance of any unidisciplinary reports that may be available, they will undertake a multidisciplinary assessment where appropriate, to confirm a diagnosis and to determine the necessary interventions.

The HSE does not fund or reimburse any fees paid to private practitioners in any of the health service areas where assessments have been commissioned by the service user or their family.

The HSE remains committed to the delivery of appropriate services for children with disabilities and will work 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 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.

Yours sincerely,



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