

27<sup>th</sup> November, 2023 (date prepared)  
14<sup>th</sup> February, 2024 (date issued)

Mr Thomas Gould, TD.,  
Dáil Eireann,  
Dublin 2

**PQ 46142/23**

**“To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of children given an assessment of needs in 2023 in Cork to date and the number currently awaiting same.”**

Dear Deputy Gould,

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

Children and young people born on or after 1<sup>st</sup> June 2002 who are suspected of having a disability can apply for an Assessment of Need (AON) under the Disability Act (2005). The Act provides for an assessment of the child’s health and education needs. The assessment of need process consists of two stages. Stage 1 involves a review of the application by an Assessment Officer. It is a combined desktop and information gathering exercise carried out by an Assessment Officer that includes receiving an application, acknowledging its receipt, ensuring the application is completed in full, checking the child’s eligibility and requesting additional reports or information from the parents if they were not supplied with the application. Where appropriate, Stage 2 commences when the child / young person is referred for a clinical assessment.

Assessment of Need data is reported on a quarterly basis. The most recent available report provides data at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023. In the first six months of this year, 460 applications for AON were received in Cork. During the same period, 284 AON reports were completed.

At 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 there were 109 AONs overdue to commence with a further 642 overdue to complete in the Cork area. Twenty-one assessments were overdue because of exceptional circumstances. These are assessments that are delayed at the request of, or in agreement with the applicant or their parent.

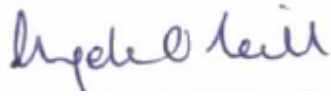
The volume of applications for AON has grown steadily since the commencement of Part 2 of the Disability Act (2005) on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2007. The number of applications received in the twelve months up to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 was the highest received since the commencement of the Act. Notwithstanding this increased demand, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare has progressed a number of waiting list initiatives to improve our compliance with the legislative timeframes for AON.

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare acknowledges the lengthy waiting times that parents are experiencing under the Assessment of Need process. We sincerely regret that any child has to wait for an assessment and both management and staff fully appreciate the level of stress that families are experiencing due to the current waiting times. It is important to note that an Assessment of Need under the Disability Act (2005) is not required to access HSE or HSE funded services. Families can refer their children directly to services. Cork Kerry Community Healthcare is committed to the delivery of

appropriate services for people with disabilities and will work with service users, families and service providers to develop services that meet their needs.

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

Yours sincerely



---

**Ms. Angela O'Neill,  
Head of Disability Services,  
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**

