



Oifig an Stiúirthóir Cúnta Náisiúnta,
Foireann Míchumais Náisiúnta,
An Chéad Urlár - Oifigí 13, 14, 15,
Áras Phlásóg na Rós, Coimpléasc Gnó na hOllscoile,
Páirc Náisiúnta Teicneolaíochta,
Caladh an Treoigh,
Luimneach.

Office of the Assistant National Director,
National Disability Team,
First Floor- Offices 13, 14, 15,
Roselawn House, University Business Complex,
National Technology Park,
Castletroy,
Limerick.

3rd May 2024

Deputy Pádraig O'Sullivan,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: padraig.osullivan@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy O'Sullivan,

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: 11846/24

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of assessment of needs conducted per annum in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and to date in 2024; 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.

There has been a 25% increase in the number of applications for AON received in 2023 – from 6,775 in 2022 to 8,472. This growth has continued into 2024, with a further 2,603 received in Quarter 1 (470 up on same period last year).

A total of 3,205 AONs were completed in 2023. The percentage of these AONs that show 'No Disability' has increased significantly from 15.8% in 2010 to 27% in 2023. The significance of this is that the AO and possibly Assessors would have spent time assessing these applications as they would have either gone through the AON process and deemed not to have a disability (as defined by the Disability Act), or they would have begun the process and been identified as not having a disability during the desk-top phase. This trend has continued into the first quarter of 2024, with 31% of AONs indicating 'no disability'.

The table below which gives information on the number of AONs completed in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and quarter 1 and 2024 (this is the most recent validated information available). This information is extracted from the Assessment Officer System Database.



Year	<i>The number of assessment of need reports under the Disability Act 2005 completed per annum</i>
2020	3,911
2021	8,353
2022	3,071
2023	3,205
2024 (end of Q1)	849

In 2021, the additional funding of €7.8m allocated to the Assessment of Need (AON) process via Slaintecare was utilised to provide additional assessments through a range of options including overtime for existing staff and private procurement. Activity throughout 2021 indicates that there was significant progress in the number of Assessment of Need reports completed during the year, 8,353 by year end. This activity continued during the first quarter of 2022 with a further significant reduction in the total number of applications 'overdue for completion', which stood at 1,718 (including 254 applications for which an extended time-frame was negotiated with the parent on the grounds of there being exceptional circumstances as provided for in paragraph 10 of the regulations).

However, a High Court judgement delivered on 11th March 2022 impacted on the completion of assessments since that date. As a consequence of the judgement, Assessment Officers could no longer complete assessments based on the agreed Preliminary Team Assessment format. The requirement to provide diagnostic assessments under the terms of the Act for children who apply for an AON has impacted significantly on the number of applications that are overdue for completion since the High Court Judgement.

Yours Sincerely,



Bernard O'Regan
Assistant National Director
National Disability Team

