



Oifig an Stiúrthóir 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 John Brady,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: john.brady@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Brady,

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: 11976/24

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number currently awaiting an assessment of need by the children's disability network team, broken down by CHO and waiting list timeframe that is, by one, three, six, 12 and greater than 12 months, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

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 or Primary Care 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.

Assessment Officers prepare Assessment of Need reports. Undertaking clinical assessments, either from direct referral to the CDNTs or following a request from an Assessment Officer as part of the legislative Assessment of Need (AON) process, is an integral function of the everyday work of all clinical staff on CDNTs.

Team clinicians allocate their time between assessments and interventions based on a number of factors, including the legislative requirement of AON under the Disability Act 2005, the National Prioritisation Policy for CDNTs, their clinical judgement, caseload management and current service demands. Information regarding CDNT waiting lists is given further below.

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 judgement of Ms Justice S Phelan in the case of CTM & JA v the HSE was delivered in March 2022. This judgment 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 had 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 has also impacted significantly on their capacity to provide necessary intervention / treatment for children with disabilities.

As a result of the Judgement, activity indicates that there has been an increase in the total number of applications 'overdue for completion', which now stands at 9,924 (including 369 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).

Overall, it is estimated that there are approximately 15,000 applications 'overdue for completion' at this time. This includes AONs currently overdue and Preliminary Team Assessments that now require diagnostic assessment. In addition, an estimated 8,000 new AONs are anticipated during 2024 based on the number of AONs received over in 2023.

Assessment of Need is reported on quarterly. The most recent data available is the end of Quarter 1 2024. 9,924 applications are overdue for completion with 369 of these on the grounds of there being exceptional circumstances as provided for in paragraph 10 of the regulations.

Please see the Table below. **Table: Applications overdue for Completion on 31st March 2024.**

CHO	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1		384	23	39	322
	Cavan/Monaghan	140	13	19	108
	Donegal	226	10	20	196
	Sligo/Leitrim	18	0	0	18
AREA 2		208	25	42	141
	Galway	118	16	23	79
	Mayo	69	6	13	50
	Roscommon	21	3	6	12
AREA 3		365	12	17	336
	Clare	44	3	4	37
	Limerick	187	4	2	181
	Tipperary N.R	134	5	11	118
AREA 4		798	89	108	601
	Kerry	33	8	3	22
	Cork North	192	21	26	145
	Cork North Lee	388	40	51	297
	Cork South Lee	161	18	23	120
	Cork West	24	2	5	17
AREA 5		482	51	56	375
	Carlow/Kilkenny	101	17	6	78
	Tipperary S.R	70	4	4	62
	Waterford	114	8	18	88
	Wexford	197	22	28	147
AREA 6		857	85	154	618
	Dublin South East	176	20	32	124
	Dublin South	210	15	35	160
	Wicklow	471	50	87	334
AREA 7		3248	147	275	2826
	Dublin South City	290	17	24	249



	Dublin South West	1005	52	83	870
	Dublin West	915	34	79	802
	Kildare/West Wicklow	1038	44	89	905
AREA 8		923	118	172	633
	Laois/Offaly	260	47	42	171
	Longford/Westmeath	30	4	9	17
	Louth	274	45	63	166
	Meath	359	22	58	279
AREA 9		2659	114	256	2289
	North Dublin	1773	58	135	1580
	Dublin North Centre	164	13	33	118
	North West Dublin	722	43	88	591
Total		9924	664	1119	8141

Actions to address AON waiting lists

The HSE's National Clinical Programme for People with Disability (NCPDP) has led the process of developing a revised AON Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) incorporating guidance on completion of clinical assessment to replace the element of the SOP which was found to be non-compliant with the Disability Act (2005) – the Preliminary Team Assessment. This was launched on July 14th 2023.

Additional funding

Approximately €10.5m was spent to address waiting lists for clinical assessments identified through the Assessment of Need process and in 2024, €5m in one off funding has been allocated. This funding is being utilised to procure diagnostic ASD assessments from the private sector. In addition, the HSE at local level is using time related savings to source AON assessments privately for children in the order as registered on the AOS (AON information management system).

A National AON tender process has been completed for the delivery of Assessment of Need from private providers. This will provide limited additional private capacity in provision of AONs due to level of private service provider engaged already for AONs. However, learning from this tender process will be shared with CHOs to support standardisation across CHOs.

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

Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs)

91 Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) are aligned to 96 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs) across the country and are providing services and supports for children aged from birth to 18 years of age.

The CDNTs are currently providing services and supports for 45,741 children and strategies and supports for urgent cases on the waitlist where staffing resources allow. However, there are significant challenges for CDNTs including:

- Significant staffing vacancies
- Growth in numbers of children with complex need
- Growth in demand for Assessment of Need, diverting further resources away from interventions.

Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 – 2026, Disability Services for Children and Young People

The HSE's Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 – 2026, Disability Services for Children and Young People was approved by the HSE Board on July 28th and launched by the Government and the HSE on Tuesday 24th October 2023.



The Roadmap is a targeted Service Improvement Programme to achieve a quality, accessible, equitable and timely service for all children with complex needs as a result of a disability and their families.

It sets out the overall aim for Children’s Disability Services, provided by the HSE and its partner agencies, for every child to have a childhood of inclusive experiences where they can have fun, learn, develop interests and skills, and form positive relationships with others in a range of different settings.

Based on the CDNT Staffing Census (Oct 2022), there are over 700 vacant whole time equivalent posts in CDNTs. The HSE continues to explore a range of options to enhance the retention and recruitment of essential staff across all aspects of the health services. The HSE is operating in a very competitive global market for healthcare talent as there are significant shortages of qualified healthcare professionals across the globe. The HSE Community Operations Disability Services is working collaboratively with the CDNT lead agencies at CHO level to promote CDNTs as a workplace of choice in a competitive employment market.

The Roadmap actions includes a robust suite of 60 actions, including 21 on CDNT Retention and Recruitment targets, and many of which are now in train.

National Information Management System for the CDNTs (CDNTIMS)

Historically the number of children waitlisted for children’s disability services provided by section 38 and section 39 providers has not been available nationally. The establishment of CDNTs in 2021 has facilitated the collection of this data. A National Management Information System for all 91 CDNTs is being rolled out and when implemented, will provide current data on waiting lists and other details for all CDNTs. 34 CDNTs are live at this time.

Pending full roll-out, manual data collection is on-going. Information is collated nationally per CHO.

The table below is the most recent data reported to the Business Information Unit (BIU) -end of March 2024. This shows the number of children that are waiting for an initial contact with a CDNT in the 9 CHO Areas. Data is not collated on age category of the children.

End of March 2024 CDNT Metrics BIU statistics	CHO 1	CHO 2	CHO 3	CHO 4	CHO 5	CHO 6	CHO 7	CHO 8*	CHO 9
No. of children waiting 0-3 months for an initial CDNT contact @ month end	357	149	257	150	87	34	149	361	75
No. of children waiting 4-6 months for an initial CDNT contact @ month end	257	213	217	147	112	85	114	498	82
No. of children waiting 7-12 months for an initial CDNT contact @ month end	327	260	340	176	209	231	341	367	191
No. of children waiting over 12 months for an initial CDNT contact @ month end	374	378	592	467	1217	1049	2029	1903	2484

Please note that CHO 8 stats are for the end of December 2023.

Yours Sincerely,



Bernard O'Regan
Assistant National Director
National Disability Team

