



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 April 2024

Deputy Violet-Anne Wynne,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: violet-anne.wynne@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Wynne,

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: 13321/24

To ask the Minister for Health the process that an adult must undertake to receive an autism assessment in the public health system; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

Disability services are provided based on the presenting needs of an individual rather than by the diagnosis of the individual or the actual type of disability or service required. Services are provided following individual assessment according to the person's individual requirements and care needs. Care and/or services provided are tailored to the individual needs and requirements of the child/adult with ASD.

Based on presentation to the GP, individuals can be referred on to adult psychology in Primary Care or the Multidisciplinary Adult Disability Team.

It is acknowledged however, that the current system is very variable across the country and does not adequately serve the needs of adults with autism. In many areas, adult assessments are only available privately; this is an unsatisfactory situation and we are working to address this.

Service Improvement Programme for the Autistic Community

The HSE has commenced implementation of a Service Improvement Programme for the Autistic Community based on the recommendations of the Review of the Irish Health Services for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.



This work takes two specific forms. First, a Task Group has been established under the National Clinical Programme for People with Disability to design improvements in disability services generally. This group is a multi-stakeholder group with lived experience representation.

Secondly, a Service Improvement Programme for the Autistic Community has been commenced.

Service Improvement Programme for the Autistic Community (SIP)

The HSE has commenced implementation of a Service Improvement Programme for the Autistic Community based on the recommendations of the 'Review of the Irish Health Services for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder' and consists of senior strategic, operational and clinical decision makers, as well as independent professional / academic support. Importantly, the Programme Board has the representation of persons with lived experience of Autism participating as equal members of this important collaborative team effort.

The Programme Board is tasked with leading out on an agreed set of priorities that will have greatest impact in terms of shaping how services can be delivered to people with Autism and in creating greater awareness of Autism through supporting communities to promote inclusion and foster positive attitudes.

The two primary priorities are (1) The implementation of a tiered model of assessment as recommended in the ASD Review Report, led by the Assessment and Pathways Working Group, and (2) The implementation of a Programme of Awareness Raising and Communications, led by the Awareness and Communications Working Group.

Assessment and Pathway Working Group:

An Assessment and Pathways Working Group has been working to develop a Standardised Assessment Approach for use in all services dealing with the assessment of those with Autism to ensure that every assessment is of an acceptable and agreed standard, regardless of which service is being accessed.

Awareness and Communications Working Group:

The Awareness Stream of the programme aims to build Awareness of Autism, and the services and supports available to autistic people, both within the Service User, Family Member and communities and within the Service Providers themselves.

It is designed to respond to the call for greater clarity amongst clinicians and Service Providers regarding both Autism and the supports available to autistic people by firstly developing a programme of better information for autistic people and their families, helping them to find services, access support and understand their condition better and secondly providing guidance to clinicians and Service Providers.

The initial phase of webpages relating to Autism content is available to the public on www.hse.ie

AsIAM

In addition to the above improvements, the HSE is providing funding to many organisations providing services to meet the needs and requirements of people with autism including AsIAM.

AsIAM (Autism Spectrum Information, Advice and Meeting Point CLG) is a relatively new organisation, set up in 2014 to support people on the Autism Spectrum by providing information, advice and an online meeting point. AsIAM also provides a platform for people affected by Autism to share their stories and views. A significant numbers of AsIAM employees are neurodiverse.

The organisation's vision is for Ireland to be a country where all autistic and neurodiverse people are accepted as they are, equal, valued, respected and included.

AsIAM undertakes a range of programmes and campaigns which work towards the goal of bringing about a more inclusive Ireland for those living with Autism.

AsIAM Phone Line for the Autistic Community



Since 2022, the HSE is funding fund AsIAM to provide a phone line for the autistic community.

With HSE support, AsIAM operates the Information Line by phone and instant messaging for not less than 20 hours per week (presently 5 hours per day, 4 days per week) with email support provided Monday to Friday. The calls are responded to by either a clinician or an appropriately qualified autistic advisor to ensure appropriate responses and supports to meet the needs and concerns of the range of callers and to inform follow-on activity.

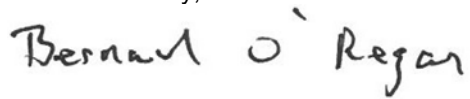
The aim of the service over the three years will be to develop the range of information resources, seminars and programmatic activity so that callers will receive the information and support they need.

All callers will receive a follow-on email summarising their call and where required, will be provided with follow-on information and supporting methods/tools.

Further information can be obtained at:

<https://asiam.ie/>

Yours Sincerely,



Bernard O'Regan
Assistant National Director
National Disability Team

