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23<sup>rd</sup> April 2025

**Deputy Timmy Dooley**  
**8 Mill Road**  
**Ennis**  
**Co. Clare**

**Re: PQ 14987/25 - "To ask the Minister for Health the number of children assessed for autism by the Primary Care Team in Co. Clare since the introduction of the National Access Policy in 2022; and if she will make a statement on the matter"**

Dear Deputy Dooley,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in regard to your parliamentary question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Since the implementation of the National Access Policy (NAP) in June 2022, 157 children (who are currently accessing Primary Care Services) have been identified as requiring or potentially requiring an autism assessment. The names of these children were added to the Primary Care Autism Assessment Register by a Clinician attached to Primary Care, with parental consent and in the knowledge that the service has yet to be developed within Primary Care.

Prior to the implementation of NAP all children requiring autism assessment and interventions were referred to Community Disability Network Teams (CDNTs). Since the implementation of NAP, not all children who require an Autism assessment now meet the new eligibility criteria for the CDNTs. Historically, Primary Care Services did not provide an Autism assessment service and as advised above, the service has yet to be developed within Primary Care.

The HSE Midwest has commissioned a private service provider to complete multidisciplinary autism assessments for children attending Primary Care Services. The service provider is in the process of recruiting staff for this multidisciplinary team.

All of the children added to the Primary Care Autism Assessment Register continue to access clinically appropriate interventions delivered by Primary Care (i.e. Psychology, Occupational Therapy, Speech & Language Therapy, Physiotherapy and Dietetics) to support their identified health care needs.

I trust the above information addresses the issues raised in your representation.

Yours sincerely,

**Carmel McLaughlin**  
**General Manager**  
**Primary Care**