



**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.

26<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Deputy Sorca Clarke,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [sorca.clarke@oireachtas.ie](mailto:sorca.clarke@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy Clarke,

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: 5244/25**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth the number of ASD assessments outsourced to private providers, per county of residence of the child, in each of the years 2022 to 2024, in tabular form.*

**HSE Response**

With regard to Childrens' Disability Services, private providers are currently being contracted by the HSE and its funded agencies to provide assessments and / or interventions. In such instances, the HSE and HSE funded agencies ensure that the contracted providers are appropriately qualified and that any assessments or interventions are provided in line with the appropriate standards, appropriate procurement procedures, Garda vetting and due diligence practice.

Some families source private assessments to facilitate access to educational supports such as special schools or classes. In many cases, these are unidisciplinary assessments which may be accepted in the education sector. However, many of these assessments maybe unnecessary, as the relevant school should be in a position to support the child without them.

In general, HSE or HSE funded services, in line with best practice guidelines, use a multidisciplinary approach to assessment, specifically to ASD assessment. In these circumstances, while HSE services may take cognisance of any unidisciplinary reports that may be available, they will undertake a multidisciplinary assessment where appropriate, to confirm a diagnosis and to determine the necessary interventions.



## Assessment of Need under the Disability Act 2005

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.

There was a 26% increase in the number of applications for AON received in 2024 – from 8,472 in 2023 to 10,690. The total number of applications 'overdue for completion' at end of 2024, now stands at 14,221 – which represents an increase of 60% on the end 2023 figure of 8,893.

In 2024, 4,162 AONs have been completed which is a 30% increase on 2023 figure of 3,205. This increase is due in part to the targeted waiting list initiative that commenced May 2024, where the Government allocated funding of €6.89 million to facilitate the HSE to procure up to 2,500 additional AONs. See further information and Table 2 below.

### Data regarding Assessment of Need

Please see Table 1 below which gives data on the numbers of Applications received and completed per year since 2022. The numbers overdue at the end of each year is also given

Please note that this information is extracted from the Assessment Officer System Database which does not distinguish between Assessments of Need which were outsourced or which were completed by the HSE CDNTs. Please note it is not possible to segregate out assessments for ASD from overall assessments completed.

**Table 1**

Year	Number of Applications for AON received	Number of AONs completed	Number of AONs 'overdue for completion'
2022	6,755	3,071	4,613
2023	8,472	3,205	8,893
2024	10,690	4,162	14,221

The increased numbers of applications for Assessment of Need, which is a legal entitlement under the Disability Act 2005, is a reflection of the increase in population and of families exploring all options for accessing services for their child.

### Actions to address overdue Assessments of Need

Approximately €10.5m was spent in 2023 to address waiting lists for clinical assessments identified through the Assessment of Need process and in 2024, an additional €5m in one off funding was allocated. This funding is being utilised to procure diagnostic ASD assessments from the private sector. The HSE at local level is also using time related savings to source AON assessments privately for children in the order as registered on the AOS (AON information management system) in line with the date of receipt of a completed AON application.

### Targeted Initiative focussed on long waiting families

This waiting list initiative has targeted those families waiting longest for AONs, with the HSE reimbursing clinicians directly through the procurement of capacity from approved private providers. This provides a more equitable and fair approach rather than reimbursement of parents directly. This initiative was progressed through the existing framework of providers procured by each CHO Area and also sought to expand the list with any new private provision.

Information received from the CHO Areas indicates that under this targeted initiative, 2,479 AONs have been commissioned from private providers/assessors from June to December, 2024 at a cost of €8,229,919. See Table 2.



**Table 2**

	Number of AONs commissioned from Private Providers under the 2024 Targeted initiative
June	379
July	342
August	371
September	318
October	344
November	365
December	360
<b>Total to date</b>	<b>2,479</b>

**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.

Yours Sincerely,

**Bernard O'Regan**  
**Assistant National Director,**  
**Access and Integration,**  
**Disability Services**

