



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.

6<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Deputy David Cullinane,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.  
E-mail: [david.cullinane@oireachtas.ie](mailto:david.cullinane@oireachtas.ie)

**PQ: 38130/25**

*To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the number of people overdue for assessment of need at the end of June in each of the years 2020 to 2025, in tabular form; and the number for each local health area or community healthcare network or children's disability network team.*

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

Thank you for your Parliamentary Question referenced above, which has been forwarded to me for direct reply.

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 Disability Act outlines the statutory timelines under which Assessments of Need under the Act must be completed. In summary, the assessment report must be completed within 6 months of the date the application was received. While the HSE endeavours to meet its legislative obligations under the Act, it has struggled to achieve compliance with these timeframes. In Q2 2025, 12% of assessments were completed within the timeframes set out in the Disability Act 2005 and accompanying Regulations.

The total number of applications 'overdue for completion' at end of Q2 2025, now stands at 16,593 (including 1,054 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) – which represents an increase of an 12% on the end of Q2 2025 figure of 15,296. This is largely due to the following:

- A further 3,482 new applications were received in Q2, 2025, making a total of 6,613 received to date in 2025 - a 24% increase on the figure for the same period last year of 5,345.
- 1,516 AONs were completed in Q2 2025, a 53% increase on the same period in 2024 of 992. The percentage of these AONs that show 'No Disability' has increased from 15.8% in 2010 to 26% in 2025.
- The judgement in the case of CTM & JA v the HSE March 2022 found that the Preliminary Team Assessment (PTA) approach described in the HSE's SOP for AON did not meet the requirements of the Disability Act. The HSE is now required to deliver diagnostic assessments where necessary and appropriate as part of the AON.
- The number of applications for AON under the Act has risen steadily since its implementation in June 2007, largely driven by the High Court ruling in 2009 which confirmed that eligibility for AON applies to persons born on or after 1st June 2002. In 2008, the first full year of the implementation of the Disability Act, we received 2,535 applications for Assessment of Need; we could receive as many as 13,000 applications in 2025 (based on 6,613 in first half of the year) representing a five-fold increase.
- The non-commencement of the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004). The number of children aged five and over, and in addition of school-going age, has risen steadily as a percentage of all applications received. **At the end of 2011, the figure stood at 26%, while at end Q2, 2025, this figure has increased to 72%.**



Please see table 1 below which gives the number of AON applications overdue for completion at Quarter 2 2025 as extracted from the AOS (AON information management system). This is the most recent data available. Information is now reported by Regional Healthcare Areas and LHO.

**Table 1. AON Applications overdue at end of Quarter 2 2025.**

RHA	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
<b>HSE Dublin &amp; North East</b>		<b>5204</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>4386</b>
	Cavan/Monaghan	396	21	41	334
	Louth	793	33	103	657
	Meath	817	38	114	665
	North Dublin	1833	60	202	1571
	Dublin North Centre	351	17	48	286
	North West Dublin	1014	42	99	873
<b>HSE Dublin &amp; Midlands</b>		<b>6143</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>5469</b>
	Dublin South City	524	21	38	465
	Dublin South West	1602	21	116	1465
	Dublin West	1537	37	99	1401
	Kildare/West Wicklow	1828	49	107	1672
	Laois/Offaly	606	39	114	453
	Longford/Westmeath	46	6	27	13
<b>HSE Dublin &amp; South East</b>		<b>2524</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>2018</b>
	Carlow/Kilkenny	160	14	20	126
	Tipperary S.R	85	4	11	70
	Waterford	169	24	24	121
	Wexford	231	15	38	178
	Dublin South East	457	22	53	382
	Dublin South	459	31	66	362
	Wicklow	963	43	141	779
<b>HSE South West</b>		<b>1359</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>1005</b>
	Kerry	67	6	9	52
	Cork North	333	17	44	272
	Cork North Lee	620	50	107	463
	Cork South Lee	288	33	66	189
	Cork West	51	10	12	29
<b>HSE Mid West</b>		<b>447</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>396</b>
	Clare	68	1	12	55
	Limerick	232	3	20	209
	Tipperary N.R	147	5	10	132
<b>HSE West &amp; North West</b>		<b>916</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>724</b>
	Donegal	317	7	27	283
	Sligo/Leitrim	41	12	17	12
	Galway	256	9	39	208
	Mayo	244	14	42	188
	Roscommon	58	6	19	33
<b>Total</b>		<b>16593</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>1885</b>	<b>13998</b>



Please see Appendix 1, which provides the information requested for 2020 to 2024.

Table 2 gives AON overdue at end of Q2 2020

Table 3 gives AON overdue at end of Q2 2021

Table 4 gives AON overdue at end of Q2 2022

Table 5 gives AON overdue at end of Q2 2023

Table 6 gives AON overdue at end of Q2 2024

### **Actions to address AON waiting lists**

The HSE's National Clinical Programme for People with Disability (NCPDP) 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. In developing this, the HSE included a wide range of stakeholders, including families, providers, staff and representative bodies. The revised AON Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was launched in July 2023.

### **Additional funding**

In the first half of 2025, 2,928 AONs have been completed. This increase is due in part to the funding of €4.5m (in addition to €5m in non-core funding) that has been allocated in Budget 2025 to assist with sustainably addressing the Assessment of Need (AON) backlog. This additional funding is building on the €6.89 million allocated by the Government in 2024 for a targeted waiting list initiative that commenced end of May 2024.

Information received from the Health Regions indicates that under this targeted initiative, 4,976 AONs have been commissioned from private providers/assessors from June 2024 to June, 2025.

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.

However, an AON is not required to access Primary Care, Children's Disability Services or Mental Health Services providing services including assessment, goals setting, intervention and follow up services. This direct access ensures more efficient and timely access for many families. The situation in relation to AON is not the same in every area. The numbers of applications in some areas have historically been significantly lower than other areas. This reflects a service model used in those areas to engage with families as soon as practicable and support them to access services without them having to resort to the Assessment of Need legal route.

This will be explored by the HSE in the context of the Roadmap for Service Improvement actions relating to Services Access and Improvement, with the objective to spread this good practice across all teams nationally, and rebalancing the demand for AON with CDNT Service Provision, including workshops with families and with staff on how this can be achieved.

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to review the Disability Act and we await further clarification on the timing and scope of this. In the meantime, we are also focusing on a communication campaign to ensure families know that an AON is not a requirement to access services. In addition, the following steps are being taken to improve access to timely AONs:

- We are reviewing the current Standard Operating Procedure to develop a more tiered approach to AON.
- We are engaging with Dept. of Education to remove school principals' requirement that an AON report is needed to determine educational need.
- Additional resource has been allocated in 2025 to increase the numbers of Assessment Officers and Liaison Officers. These will be prioritised to those areas, primarily in Dublin and Cork, with the longest waiting lists for AON.
- We are increasing the numbers of Assessment Officers and Liaison Officers. These will be prioritised to those areas, primarily in Dublin and Cork, with the longest waiting lists for AON.



- 5 AON Administrative Hubs and 3 AON Assessment Hubs have been established, which will inform the core of a service improvement plan that will also include increased learning and support for staff involved in AON. Improvements will include:-
  - Single point of contact for families and other services, allowing better awareness and appropriate signposting/diversion
  - Increases in efficiency and speed of assessment
  - Ability to review all referrals in the one process, and ensure clear chronological order for starting process in line with HSE SOP
  - Better communication amongst AO, and other staff, including updates in practice due to legal cases
  - Better sharing of knowledge and experience, and support to AO – leading to more standardised and consistent approaches
  - Better tracking of referrals
  - More efficient and better data collection
  - Clinicians working directly with Assessment Officers and all clinical staff delivering AON to promote education, training, enhanced governance, clinical supervision and collective understanding across AON
- We are introducing a Single Point of Referral Access for all Children's Primary Care, Disability and CAMH Services, in 2025, in line with existing models of good practice. AON will be included in this leading to better processes and communication around AON
- We will continue to procure of capacity from approved private providers.
- We will continue the roll out of initiatives to address staff vacancy rates in Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs), building a pipeline of supply of health and social care professions.

Since taking office, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Norma Foley, and Minister of State for Disability, Hildegard Naughton, have held meetings with disability stakeholders from the HSE and Lead Agencies to better understand the challenges that face children's disability services across the country, including the current situation regarding Assessments of Need.

Yours Sincerely,

---

Tom McGuirk,  
General Manager, Disability Services, Access & Integration



## Appendix 1

Table 2 gives AON overdue at end of Q2 2020

CHO	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
<b>AREA 1</b>		<b>133</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>64</b>
	Cavan/Monaghan	90	20	28	42
	Donegal	33	5	11	17
	Sligo/Leitrim	10	2	3	5
<b>AREA 2</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>39</b>
	Galway	58	13	18	27
	Mayo	39	11	16	12
	Roscommon	3	2	1	0
<b>AREA 3</b>		<b>589</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>409</b>
	Clare	84	14	21	49
	Limerick	311	33	62	216
	Tipperary N.R	194	12	38	144
<b>AREA 4</b>		<b>943</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>692</b>
	Kerry	60	4	18	38
	Cork North	141	19	32	90
	Cork North Lee	340	28	58	254
	Cork South Lee	351	22	46	283
	Cork West	51	8	16	27
<b>AREA 5</b>		<b>555</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>433</b>
	Carlow/Kilkenny	80	4	12	64
	Tipperary S.R	106	4	27	75
	Waterford	148	25	29	94
	Wexford	221	8	13	200
<b>AREA 6</b>		<b>236</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>130</b>
	Dublin South East	15	2	2	11
	Dublin South	41	4	14	23
	Wicklow	180	35	49	96
<b>AREA 7</b>		<b>942</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>702</b>
	Dublin South City	58	8	19	31
	Dublin South West	408	17	74	317
	Dublin West	144	17	35	92
	Kildare/West Wicklow	332	34	36	262
<b>AREA 8</b>		<b>721</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>531</b>
	Laois/Offaly	384	14	61	309
	Longford/Westmeath	14	6	5	3
	Louth	99	8	16	75
	Meath	224	19	61	144
<b>AREA 9</b>		<b>1314</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>1028</b>
	North Dublin	692	56	90	546
	Dublin North Centre	146	8	22	116
	North West Dublin	476	36	74	366
<b>Total</b>		<b>5533</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>1007</b>	<b>4028</b>



Table 3 gives AON overdue at end of Q2 2021

CHO	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
<b>AREA 1</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>
	Cavan/Monaghan	5	2	3	0
	Donegal	13	6	6	1
	Sligo/Leitrim	1	1	0	0
<b>AREA 2</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
	Galway	11	6	3	2
	Mayo	8	6	0	2
	Roscommon	2	2	0	0
<b>AREA 3</b>		<b>127</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>82</b>
	Clare	30	4	5	21
	Limerick	61	16	5	40
	Tipperary N.R	36	9	6	21
<b>AREA 4</b>		<b>997</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>712</b>
	Kerry	107	13	11	83
	Cork North	153	13	19	121
	Cork North Lee	406	49	81	276
	Cork South Lee	299	28	68	203
	Cork West	32	1	2	29
<b>AREA 5</b>		<b>158</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>133</b>
	Carlow/Kilkenny	12	1	3	8
	Tipperary S.R	41	4	4	33
	Waterford	59	0	2	57
	Wexford	46	4	7	35
<b>AREA 6</b>		<b>99</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>
	Dublin South East	17	8	5	4
	Dublin South	11	1	5	5
	Wicklow	71	21	23	27
<b>AREA 7</b>		<b>936</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>644</b>
	Dublin South City	96	9	20	67
	Dublin South West	322	25	65	232
	Dublin West	208	31	57	120
	Kildare/West Wicklow	310	30	55	225
<b>AREA 8</b>		<b>186</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>102</b>
	Laois/Offaly	62	6	12	44
	Longford/Westmeath	6	2	2	2
	Louth	13	6	5	2
	Meath	105	26	25	54
<b>AREA 9</b>		<b>1066</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>778</b>
	North Dublin	642	70	101	471
	Dublin North Centre	96	5	15	76
	North West Dublin	328	34	63	231
<b>Total</b>		<b>3609</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>2492</b>



Table 4 gives AON overdue at end of Q2 2022

CHO	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
<b>AREA 1</b>		<b>156</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>60</b>
	Cavan/Monaghan	51	21	29	1
	Donegal	80	10	28	42
	Sligo/Leitrim	25	0	8	17
<b>AREA 2</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>13</b>
	Galway	27	4	13	10
	Mayo	16	2	13	1
	Roscommon	5	1	2	2
<b>AREA 3</b>		<b>87</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>7</b>
	Clare	17	8	9	0
	Limerick	37	20	12	5
	Tipperary N.R	33	17	14	2
<b>AREA 4</b>		<b>587</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>476</b>
	Kerry	51	2	14	35
	Cork North	83	4	9	70
	Cork North Lee	282	18	33	231
	Cork South Lee	164	13	15	136
	Cork West	7	1	2	4
<b>AREA 5</b>		<b>123</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>86</b>
	Carlow/Kilkenny	18	4	3	11
	Tipperary S.R	14	3	5	6
	Waterford	11	2	2	7
	Wexford	80	6	12	62
<b>AREA 6</b>		<b>115</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>53</b>
	Dublin South East	6	1	4	1
	Dublin South	22	3	15	4
	Wicklow	87	9	30	48
<b>AREA 7</b>		<b>452</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>187</b>
	Dublin South City	37	5	13	19
	Dublin South West	122	41	43	38
	Dublin West	124	26	43	55
	Kildare/West Wicklow	169	36	58	75
<b>AREA 8</b>		<b>236</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>120</b>
	Laois/Offaly	80	11	26	43
	Longford/Westmeath	13	7	5	1
	Louth	22	10	8	4
	Meath	121	14	35	72
<b>AREA 9</b>		<b>727</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>447</b>
	North Dublin	489	31	136	322
	Dublin North Centre	38	4	10	24
	North West Dublin	200	31	68	101
<b>Total</b>		<b>2531</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>1449</b>



Table 5 gives AON overdue at end of Q2 2023

CHO	LHO	Total Overdue <sup>1</sup>	Overdue/ Exceptional Circumstances <sup>2</sup>	Overdue/ No Exceptional Circumstances
<b>AREA 1</b>		<b>304</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>278</b>
	Cavan/Monaghan	120	2	118
	Donegal	152	0	152
	Sligo/Leitrim	32	24	8
<b>AREA 2</b>		<b>87</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>80</b>
	Galway	50	6	44
	Mayo	35	1	34
	Roscommon	2	0	2
<b>AREA 3</b>		<b>328</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>327</b>
	Clare	37	0	37
	Limerick	189	1	188
	Tipperary N.R	102	0	102
<b>AREA 4</b>		<b>706</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>684</b>
	Kerry	43	1	42
	Cork North	113	5	108
	Cork North Lee	344	13	331
	Cork South Lee	181	3	178
	Cork West	25	0	25
<b>AREA 5</b>		<b>328</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>324</b>
	Carlow/Kilkenny	50	0	50
	Tipperary S.R	52	1	51
	Waterford	78	1	77
	Wexford	148	2	146
<b>AREA 6</b>		<b>417</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>357</b>
	Dublin South East	54	9	45
	Dublin South	127	23	104
	Wicklow	236	28	208
<b>AREA 7</b>		<b>1986</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1982</b>
	Dublin South City	180	1	179
	Dublin South West	609	1	608
	Dublin West	576	2	574
	Kildare/West Wicklow	621	0	621
<b>AREA 8</b>		<b>433</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>427</b>
	Laois/Offaly	137	0	137
	Longford/Westmeath	32	1	31
	Louth	82	4	78
	Meath	182	1	181
<b>AREA 9</b>		<b>1906</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>1800</b>
	North Dublin	1272	81	1191
	Dublin North Centre	88	3	85
	North West Dublin	546	22	524
<b>Total</b>		<b>6495</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>6259</b>





Table 6 gives AON overdue at end of Q2 2024

CHO	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
<b>AREA 1</b>		<b>437</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>358</b>
	Cavan/Monaghan	165	6	30	129
	Donegal	248	5	20	223
	Sligo/Leitrim	24	15	3	6
<b>AREA 2</b>		<b>264</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>170</b>
	Galway	130	10	24	96
	Mayo	103	7	36	60
	Roscommon	31	7	10	14
<b>AREA 3</b>		<b>380</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>347</b>
	Clare	47	4	4	39
	Limerick	193	2	5	186
	Tipperary N.R	140	3	15	122
<b>AREA 4</b>		<b>849</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>618</b>
	Kerry	32	5	12	15
	Cork North	214	25	34	155
	Cork North Lee	398	30	54	314
	Cork South Lee	179	23	37	119
	Cork West	26	4	7	15
<b>AREA 5</b>		<b>523</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>429</b>
	Carlow/Kilkenny	108	8	8	92
	Tipperary S.R	71	2	5	64
	Waterford	120	3	15	102
	Wexford	224	21	32	171
<b>AREA 6</b>		<b>975</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>705</b>
	Dublin South East	255	40	68	147
	Dublin South	188	3	16	169
	Wicklow	532	56	87	389
<b>AREA 7</b>		<b>3732</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>3200</b>
	Dublin South City	336	16	34	286
	Dublin South West	1159	43	133	983
	Dublin West	1026	27	91	908
	Kildare/West Wicklow	1211	47	141	1023
<b>AREA 8</b>		<b>1123</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>801</b>
	Laois/Offaly	286	14	54	218
	Longford/Westmeath	40	8	17	15
	Louth	369	29	104	236
	Meath	428	16	80	332
<b>AREA 9</b>		<b>2848</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>2407</b>
	North Dublin	1820	63	171	1586
	Dublin North Centre	222	25	43	154
	North West Dublin	806	51	88	667
<b>Total</b>		<b>11131</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>1478</b>	<b>9035</b>