



**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,**
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Roselawn House, University Business
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30th July 2025

Deputy Pa Daly,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: pa.daly@oireachtas.ie

PQ: 40338/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the number of people under 18 who are on an autism assessment waiting list, broken down by county; the length of time they have been on this waiting list in each of the years 2020 to 2024 and to date in 2025, in tabular form.

Dear Deputy Daly,

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

National Access Policy

The National Policy on Access to Services for Children & Young People with Disability & Developmental Delay ensures that children under 18 are directed to the appropriate service based on the complexity of their presenting needs i.e. Primary Care for non-complex functional difficulties and Children's Disability Network Teams for complex functional difficulties arising from their disability. Children with ASD may access supports from a Children's Disability Network Team or from Primary Care or from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) depending on the complexity of their needs.

There is a significant demand for a range of assessments for children with complex disability needs. Many children require lengthy diagnostic ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) assessments. Some children who are suspected of having autism do not have complex disability needs and receive the necessary assessments and supports from Primary Care services. Children with autism who have complex disability needs access a range of supports through their local Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT). Depending on presenting needs, some children may require to access these assessments through Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

With regard to the question asked, the HSE does not currently collect information specifically on children identified with autism on a national basis. Children's disability services are provided based on the presenting needs of the child rather than by their diagnosis or the actual type of disability or service required. Services are provided following individual assessment according to the child's individual requirements and support needs.

Although the HSE has experienced an increased demand for assessment of Autism, we cannot be sure that this is a result of increased prevalence. It may be due to increased awareness of autism coupled with a recognition for the need for earlier interventions. In addition, many individuals with autism due to the complexity of their presentation may have a primary diagnosis of intellectual disability or a co-morbid mental health component.

Service Improvement Programme

The Service Improvement Programme Board for the Autistic Community has been 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 autistic people. It is also tasked with creating greater awareness of autism in terms of supporting clinicians, other staff and local communities in promoting inclusion and fostering positive attitudes.



The Assessment and Pathways Working Group was established to develop a standardised assessment approach for use in all services dealing with the assessment of Autism to ensure that every assessment is of an acceptable and agreed standard, regardless of which service is being accessed. In addition, it seeks to agree a standardised service user journey and the implementation of a consistent core service offering across those providing services to people who are Autistic. The Working Group, including people with lived experience of autism, has consulted widely with key stakeholders in the design and formulation stage of the project; which has been particularly important in the context of the implementation of a tiered approach to assessment.

Its main work focus is:

- To develop an operational model for a tiered approach to Autism Assessment through developing clear and functioning pathways to services.
- To strengthen Disability, Primary Care and Mental Health services by operating a shared Model of Service.
- An implementation plan to include training which takes cognisance of existing policies of the HSE.

The 2nd and final Phase of the Protocol piloting is now complete, as is the independent evaluation undertaken by the Centre for Effective Services. Following incorporation of learnings from the evaluation and further consultation with professional bodies and civil society, we anticipate that national rollout of the final version of the protocol will commence with training in each of the 6 Health Regions in Quarter 4 2025. The Protocol will be reviewed annually with new learnings incorporated as needs be.

Yours Sincerely,

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