



Folláine

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Deputy Rice  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ Ref 41311/25 To ask the Minister for Health the number of individuals diagnosed with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder in each of the past ten years, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Rice,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a group of disorders caused by prenatal alcohol exposure and are associated with a range of lifelong physical, mental, educational, social, and behavioural difficulties. Paediatric, primary care, disability, and mental health services are all involved in the provision of services for children and adults with FASD in Ireland. No data are collected nationally on diagnosis across these services.

The HSE recognises that FASD is underdiagnosed. A survey conducted by the HSE in 2022 aimed to assess knowledge and attitudes of key health, social care, and education professionals in Ireland towards Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), FASD prevention and response to persons with FASD. There were 702 people who completed the survey, of which 69% (n=485) were healthcare professionals. Just 39 healthcare professionals reported ever having diagnosed a child or young person with FASD, and a total of 152 respondents reported having ever referred an individual with suspected FASD. A little over 54% of all respondents reported encountering 1-5 individuals with FASD in their career. The international literature suggests that the prevalence in Ireland is between 2.8% and 7.4%, thus there are high numbers of undiagnosed cases.

When survey participants were asked to identify to which services they referred individuals with suspected FASD, a wide range of services were noted including Paediatric services, Primary Care services (Public Health Nursing, Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy), Early Intervention Teams, Child Disability Network Teams, Mental Health Services, or peer support groups.

The HSE is currently exploring how services for FASD can be best implemented in Ireland, and how a scalable and sustainable model for building capacity of Ireland's health and social care workforce to work with those affected by FASD can be built.

If you require any further information or clarification, please do contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Aisling Sheehan

National Lead HSE Alcohol and Mental Health and Wellbeing Programmes, Health and Wellbeing,  
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