



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  
Treigh, Luimneach

Office of the Assistant National  
Director, National Disability Team,  
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Roselawn House, University Business  
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26<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Deputy Paul McAuliffe,  
Dáil Éireann,  
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Dublin 2.  
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**PQ: 44168/25**

*To ask the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality if she or her Department plan to alter the current departmental description of autism spectrum disorder as an umbrella term, with increased additional needs being included in this area over time; and if she will make a statement on the matter.*

Dear Deputy McAuliffe,

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

The currently preferred terminology relating to the official diagnostic category of "Autism Spectrum Disorder" is "autism", "autistic people" or "people with autism".

When referred to as an umbrella term, this is usually to recognise that the current diagnostic category of "Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)" incorporates previously distinct categories, such as ASD, Aspergers Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder.

Some people identify strongly with a particular label (e.g. "Aspergers") and do not wish to have this identify undermined by reference to another term. Reference to "ASD" as an umbrella term is therefore seeking to be sensitive to these concerns by not undermining the legitimacy of a label which someone may identify with, but which is currently subsumed under the term "ASD".

However, 'ASD' is not an umbrella term for other types of neurodiversity or neurodivergence, which may co-occur or be experienced separately without "ASD".

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 HSE is seeking to better address the need for autism assessment and services and has developed a new "Autism Assessment and Intervention Pathways Protocol" to be rolled out in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2025.

Yours sincerely,

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