



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.

9th October 2025

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

PQ: 52499/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the number of assessments of needs overdue for completion at the end of quarter three for each year to date, in tabular form.

PQ: 52586/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the number of persons overdue for assessment of need at the end of September in each year 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 Questions referenced above, which have 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%.**

With regard to the number of assessments of needs overdue for completion at the end of quarter three (July, August, September) for each year to date, please see Appendix 1. Please note that Quarter 3 2025 is not reported on as yet. Information is provided for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2025.

Appendix 1 gives the following information:

- Table 1: The number of assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter three 2020 by each LHO and CHO.
- Table 2: The number of assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter three 2021 by each LHO and CHO.
- Table 3: The number of assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter three 2022 by each LHO and CHO.
- Table 4: The number of assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter three 2023 by each LHO and CHO.
- Table 5: The number of assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter three 2024 by each LHO and CHO.
- Table 6: The number of assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter one 2025 by each LHO in each Regional Healthcare Area.
- Table 7: The number of assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter two 2025 by each LHO in each Regional Healthcare Area.

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 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 AON, 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 or any health or social care service 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 AON 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.
- The HSE are seeking to increase the numbers of Assessment Officers (AOs) and Liaison Officers (LOs). And administrative support to be allocated nationally.
- 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 LO, and other staff, including updates in practice due to legal cases
 - Better sharing of knowledge and experience, and support to AO and LO – 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 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 1: Assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter three 2020.
Of the 6,058 applications that are overdue, 4,789 (79%) are overdue for longer than 3 months.

Q3 2020

CHO	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1		138	15	29	94
	Cavan/Monaghan	85	9	14	62
	Donegal	40	0	13	27
	Sligo/Leitrim	13	6	2	5
AREA 2		91	14	19	58
	Galway	48	9	9	30
	Mayo	36	1	8	27
	Roscommon	7	4	2	1
AREA 3		587	39	82	466
	Clare	89	4	17	68
	Limerick	313	22	45	246
	Tipperary N.R	185	13	20	152
AREA 4		1031	84	157	790
	Kerry	68	16	11	41
	Cork North	169	17	30	122
	Cork North Lee	372	15	43	314
	Cork South Lee	358	30	56	272
	Cork West	64	6	17	41
AREA 5		625	11	75	539
	Carlow/Kilkenny	87	0	9	78
	Tipperary S.R	119	3	14	102
	Waterford	184	3	38	143
	Wexford	235	5	14	216
AREA 6		262	13	58	191
	Dublin South East	18	0	4	14
	Dublin South	40	1	10	29
	Wicklow	204	12	44	148
AREA 7		1095	52	168	875
	Dublin South City	91	6	30	55
	Dublin South West	461	24	57	380
=//8+	Dublin West	177	10	37	130
	Kildare/West Wicklow	366	12	44	310
AREA 8		714	37	111	566
	Laois/Offaly	345	9	45	291
	Longford/Westmeath	13	2	5	6
	Louth	115	13	19	83
	Meath	241	13	42	186
AREA 9		1515	83	222	1210
	North Dublin	772	36	105	631
	Dublin North Centre	170	7	23	140
	North West Dublin	573	40	94	439
Total		6058	348	921	4789



Table 2: Assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter three 2021.
Of the 2,907 applications that are overdue, 1,985(68%) are overdue for longer than 3 months.

Q3 2021

CHO	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1		25	11	6	8
	Cavan/Monaghan	6	2	1	3
	Donegal	19	9	5	5
	Sligo/Leitrim	0	0	0	0
AREA 2		10	6	3	1
	Galway	5	2	2	1
	Mayo	5	4	1	0
	Roscommon	0	0	0	0
AREA 3		41	10	5	26
	Clare	14	5	1	8
	Limerick	20	3	4	13
	Tipperary N.R	7	2	0	5
AREA 4		758	93	108	557
	Kerry	114	17	22	75
	Cork North	88	9	6	73
	Cork North Lee	314	35	45	234
	Cork South Lee	222	30	32	160
	Cork West	20	2	3	15
AREA 5		107	25	19	63
	Carlow/Kilkenny	15	1	7	7
	Tipperary S.R	19	4	8	7
	Waterford	33	3	0	30
	Wexford	40	17	4	19
AREA 6		65	28	19	18
	Dublin South East	16	5	8	3
	Dublin South	6	4	2	0
	Wicklow	43	19	9	15
AREA 7		899	124	118	657
	Dublin South City	101	18	9	74
	Dublin South West	298	41	43	214
	Dublin West	220	34	24	162
	Kildare/West Wicklow	280	31	42	207
AREA 8		157	50	39	68
	Laois/Offaly	60	14	22	24
	Longford/Westmeath	5	1	4	0
	Louth	2	0	2	0
	Meath	90	35	11	44
AREA 9		845	113	145	587
	North Dublin	526	65	87	374
	Dublin North Centre	64	7	11	46
	North West Dublin	255	41	47	167
Total		2907	460	462	1985



Table 3: Assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter three 2022.
Of the 3,494 applications that are overdue, 2,193 (63%) are overdue for longer than 3 months.

Q3 2022

CHO	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1		160	24	21	115
	Cavan/Monaghan	55	20	5	30
	Donegal	85	4	16	65
	Sligo/Leitrim	20	0	0	20
AREA 2		72	15	27	30
	Galway	34	9	12	13
	Mayo	31	6	13	12
	Roscommon	7	0	2	5
AREA 3		176	63	68	45
	Clare	23	9	10	4
	Limerick	101	33	34	34
	Tipperary N.R	52	21	24	7
AREA 4		589	40	71	478
	Kerry	42	1	7	34
	Cork North	88	7	9	72
	Cork North Lee	292	22	42	228
	Cork South Lee	161	8	13	140
	Cork West	6	2	0	4
AREA 5		149	10	24	115
	Carlow/Kilkenny	26	3	6	17
	Tipperary S.R	19	1	4	14
	Waterford	17	2	7	8
	Wexford	87	4	7	76
AREA 6		181	30	48	103
	Dublin South East	14	2	7	5
	Dublin South	45	9	15	21
	Wicklow	122	19	26	77
AREA 7		899	150	298	451
	Dublin South City	66	7	21	38
	Dublin South West	275	51	103	121
	Dublin West	279	52	103	124
	Kildare/West Wicklow	279	40	71	168
AREA 8		305	44	87	174
	Laois/Offaly	106	15	21	70
	Longford/Westmeath	17	3	10	4
	Louth	44	10	20	14
	Meath	138	16	36	86
AREA 9		963	93	188	682
	North Dublin	609	55	92	462
	Dublin North Centre	48	3	9	36
	North West Dublin	306	35	87	184
Total		3494	469	832	2193



Table 4: Assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter three 2023.
Of the 7,608 applications that are overdue, 5,876 (77%) are overdue for longer than 3 months.

Q3 2023

CHO	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1		342	45	50	247
	Cavan/Monaghan	121	25	25	71
	Donegal	182	15	15	152
	Sligo/Leitrim	39	5	10	24
AREA 2		117	22	30	65
	Galway	70	15	19	36
	Mayo	41	4	8	29
	Roscommon	6	3	3	0
AREA 3		341	24	20	297
	Clare	43	2	4	37
	Limerick	179	6	7	166
	Tipperary N.R	119	16	9	94
AREA 4		754	85	101	568
	Kerry	40	4	9	27
	Cork North	141	23	30	88
	Cork North Lee	352	26	26	300
	Cork South Lee	197	25	33	139
	Cork West	24	7	3	14
AREA 5		403	18	62	323
	Carlow/Kilkenny	64	7	7	50
	Tipperary S.R	59	3	6	50
	Waterford	102	8	16	78
	Wexford	178	0	33	145
AREA 6		510	81	93	336
	Dublin South East	88	21	20	47
	Dublin South	144	15	26	103
	Wicklow	278	45	47	186
AREA 7		2411	163	300	1948
	Dublin South City	217	14	24	179
	Dublin South West	729	55	81	593
	Dublin West	696	38	90	568
	Kildare/West Wicklow	769	56	105	608
AREA 8		501	89	104	308
	Laois/Offaly	144	17	27	100
	Longford/Westmeath	39	5	10	24
	Louth	108	38	30	40
	Meath	210	29	37	144
AREA 9		2229	170	275	1784
	North Dublin	1563	160	216	1187
	Dublin North Centre	95	0	10	85
	North West Dublin	571	10	49	512
Total		7608	697	1035	5876



Table 5: Assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter three 2024.
Of the 12,722 applications that are overdue, 10,320 (81%) are overdue for longer than 3 months.

Q3 2024

CHO	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
AREA 1		539	66	68	405
	Cavan/Monaghan	228	27	42	159
	Donegal	272	12	21	239
	Sligo/Leitrim	39	27	5	7
AREA 2		308	41	60	207
	Galway	148	15	29	104
	Mayo	123	17	25	81
	Roscommon	37	9	6	22
AREA 3		396	17	25	354
	Clare	50	4	7	39
	Limerick	204	10	9	185
	Tipperary N.R	142	3	9	130
AREA 4		932	91	172	669
	Kerry	40	6	11	23
	Cork North	224	23	35	166
	Cork North Lee	431	29	72	330
	Cork South Lee	199	29	38	132
	Cork West	38	4	16	18
AREA 5		567	40	66	461
	Carlow/Kilkenny	128	13	13	102
	Tipperary S.R	78	2	7	69
	Waterford	133	8	20	105
	Wexford	228	17	26	185
AREA 6		1252	125	235	892
	Dublin South East	318	22	60	236
	Dublin South	242	33	34	175
	Wicklow	692	70	141	481
AREA 7		4205	126	384	3695
	Dublin South City	369	6	35	328
	Dublin South West	1296	36	110	1150
	Dublin West	1174	43	116	1015
	Kildare/West Wicklow	1366	41	123	1202
AREA 8		1451	150	293	1008
	Laois/Offaly	371	40	82	249
	Longford/Westmeath	43	19	18	6
	Louth	496	50	91	355
	Meath	541	41	102	398
AREA 9		3072	146	297	2629
	North Dublin	1893	71	148	1674
	Dublin North Centre	269	19	37	213
	North West Dublin	910	56	112	742
Total		12722	802	1600	10320



Table 6: Assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter one 2025 by each LHO in each Regional Healthcare Area.

Q1 2025

RHA	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
HSE Dublin & North East		4855	248	397	4210
	Cavan/Monaghan	337	17	41	279
	Louth	711	58	78	575
	Meath	673	39	75	559
	North Dublin	1809	69	108	1632
	Dublin North Centre	330	25	22	283
	North West Dublin	995	40	73	882
HSE Dublin & Midlands		5694	200	500	4994
	Dublin South City	484	15	45	424
	Dublin South West	1509	50	96	1363
	Dublin West	1425	30	122	1273
	Kildare/West Wicklow	1692	57	133	1502
	Laois/Offaly	526	38	70	418
	Longford/Westmeath	58	10	34	14
HSE Dublin & South East		2257	137	292	1828
	Carlow/Kilkenny	153	11	18	124
	Tipperary S.R	90	6	5	79
	Waterford	147	12	25	110
	Wexford	198	17	24	157
	Dublin South East	417	13	61	343
	Dublin South	398	29	56	313
	Wicklow	854	49	103	702
HSE South West		1265	123	176	966
	Kerry	59	8	10	41
	Cork North	340	22	47	271
	Cork North Lee	576	60	64	452
	Cork South Lee	247	27	47	173
	Cork West	43	6	8	29
HSE Mid West		434	17	30	387
	Clare	59	4	6	49
	Limerick	224	6	15	203
	Tipperary N.R	151	7	9	135
HSE West & North West		791	64	110	617
	Donegal	297	8	19	270
	Sligo/Leitrim	21	6	9	6
	Galway	217	17	36	164
	Mayo	207	25	42	140
	Roscommon	49	8	4	37
Total		15296	789	1505	13002



Table 7: Assessments of need overdue for completion at the end of quarter two 2025 by each LHO in each Regional Healthcare Area.

Q2 2025

RHA	LHO	Overdue	<1 month	1 - 3 Months	>3 Months
HSE Dublin & North East		5204	211	607	4386
	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
HSE Dublin & Midlands		6143	173	501	5469
	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
HSE Dublin & South East		2524	153	353	2018
	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
HSE South West		1359	116	238	1005
	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
HSE Mid West		447	9	42	396
	Clare	68	1	12	55
	Limerick	232	3	20	209
	Tipperary N.R	147	5	10	132
HSE West & North West		916	48	144	724
	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
Total		16593	710	1885	13998