



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: 52585/25

To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the number of assessments of need conducted from 2023 to date in 2025, for each local health area or community healthcare network, in tabular form; the number conducted in the first nine months of each year; and the number and percentage of assessments in each year provided publicly, privately, and the number insourced. -

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%.**



With regard to the assessments of need conducted from 2023 to date in 2025, please see Appendix 1.

Appendix 1 gives the following information:

Table 1: The number of assessments of need completed by each Community Healthcare area (CHO) in 2023.

Table 2: The number of assessments of need completed by each Community Healthcare area (CHO) in 2024.

Table 3: The number of assessments of need completed by each LHO in each Regional Healthcare Area in Q1 2025.

Table 4: The number of assessments of need completed by each LHO in each Regional Healthcare Area in Q2 2025.

With regard to the number of assessments of need conducted in the first nine months of each year, please see the Table below which gives the number of assessments of need conducted in each Quarter for each year. Information regarding end of Quarter 3 (first nine months) is highlighted below for 2023 and 2024. Information is also provided regarding the number completed within timelines as provided for in regulations in each quarter for each year 2023-2025.

Table 5: AONs completed and number within timeline

Year	Number of AON completed	Number of AONs completed within time line	Percentage within time line
Q1 2023	560	104	19%
Q2 2023	874	120	14%
Q3 2023	888	97	11%
Q4 2023	883	97	11%
Q1 2024	849	94	11%
Q2 2024	992	95	10%
Q3 2024	1047	109	10%
Q4 2024	1274	134	11%
Q1 2025	1402	97	7%
Q2 2025	1516	179	12%

With regard to the number and percentage of assessments in each year provided publicly, privately, and the number insourced, the Assessment Officer System Database which does not distinguish between Assessments of Need carried out privately or by the HSE.

However information received from the Health Regions indicates that under a targeted waiting list initiative that commenced end of May 2024, 4,976 AONs have been commissioned from private providers/assessors from June 2024 to June, 2025. Please see table 6 below.

Table 6: Number of AONs commissioned from private providers/assessors

	Number of AONs commissioned from private providers/assessors
Jun-24	379
Jul-24	342
Aug-24	371
Sep-24	318
Oct-24	344
Nov-24	365
Dec-24	360
Jan-25	396
Feb-25	399
Mar-25	362



April	415
May	518
June	407
Total to date	4,976

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 additional funding outlined above.

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.
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- 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 1: The number of assessments of need completed by each Community Healthcare area (CHO) in 2023 and average duration of the assessment process per report completed in 2023

3,205 AON were completed. The average duration of the assessment process per report completed in 2023 was 20.42 months.

CHO	No Disability	Disability	Total for 2023	Within Timeline	% Within Timeline
AREA 1	24	298	322	31	10%
AREA 2	16	90	106	18	17%
AREA 3	18	34	52	2	4%
AREA 4	214	541	755	117	15%
AREA 5	91	44	135	41	30%
AREA 6	66	255	321	17	5%
AREA 7	95	383	478	2	0.4%
AREA 8	204	455	659	181	27%
AREA 9	121	256	377	9	2%
Total	849	2,356	3,205	418	13%

Table 2: The number of assessments of need completed by each Community Healthcare area (CHO) in 2024 and average duration of the assessment process per report completed in 2024

4162 AON were completed. The average duration of the assessment process per report completed in 2024 was 23.68 months.

CHO	No Disability	Disability	Total for 2024	Within Timeline	% Within Timeline
AREA 1	30	181	211	68	32%
AREA 2	28	143	171	6	4%
AREA 3	17	40	57	8	14%
AREA 4	195	780	975	109	11%
AREA 5	267	189	456	134	29%
AREA 6	103	332	435	13	3%
AREA 7	39	212	251	0	0%
AREA 8	160	391	551	61	11%
AREA 9	422	633	1,055	33	3%
Total	1,261	2,901	4,162	432	10%



Table 3: The number of assessments of need completed by each LHO in each Regional Healthcare Area in Q1 2025 and average duration of the assessment process per report completed in Q1 2025.

1,402 AON were completed in Q1 2025. The average duration of the assessment process per report completed in this quarter was 26.43 months.

RHA	LHO	No Disability	Disability	Total for Qtr.	Within Timeline	% Within Timeline
HSE Dublin & North East		131	385	516	11	2%
	Cavan/Monaghan	0	1	1	0	0%
	Louth	4	51	55	2	4%
	Meath	8	46	54	2	4%
	North Dublin	83	169	252	5	2%
	Dublin North Centre	12	30	42	1	2%
	North West Dublin	24	88	112	1	1%
HSE Dublin & Midlands		56	131	187	17	9%
	Dublin South City	0	8	8	0	0%
	Dublin South West	5	30	35	0	0%
	Dublin West	6	25	31	0	0%
	Kildare/West Wicklow	3	29	32	0	0%
	Laois/Offaly	20	24	44	2	5%
	Longford/Westmeath	22	15	37	15	41%
HSE Dublin & South East		111	227	338	24	7%
	Carlow/Kilkenny	11	23	34	5	15%
	Tipperary S.R	5	24	29	4	14%
	Waterford	1	38	39	1	3%
	Wexford	15	37	52	8	15%
	Dublin South East	14	25	39	0	0%
	Dublin South	19	19	38	1	3%
	Wicklow	46	61	107	5	5%
HSE South West		30	185	215	11	5%
	Kerry	5	12	17	2	12%
	Cork North	3	39	42	1	2%
	Cork North Lee	14	65	79	6	8%
	Cork South Lee	8	49	57	1	2%
	Cork West	0	20	20	1	5%
HSE Mid West		20	31	51	1	2%
	Clare	3	6	9	1	11%
	Limerick	11	12	23	0	0%
	Tipperary N.R	6	13	19	0	0%
HSE West & North West		20	75	95	33	35%
	Donegal	4	22	26	1	4%
	Sligo/Leitrim	13	27	40	31	78%
	Galway	1	14	15	1	7%
	Mayo	1	9	10	0	0%
	Roscommon	1	3	4	0	0%
Total		368	1034	1402	97	7%



Table 4: The number of assessments of need completed by each LHO in each Regional Healthcare Area in Q2 2025 and average duration of the assessment process per report completed in Q2 2025

1,516 AON were completed in Q2 2025. The average duration of the assessment process per report completed in this quarter was 24.93 months

RHA	LHO	No Disability	Disability	Total for Qtr.	Within Timeline	% Within Timeline
HSE Dublin & North East		94	410	504	28	6%
	Cavan/Monaghan	0	3	3	0	0%
	Louth	12	61	73	3	4%
	Meath	2	18	20	3	15%
	North Dublin	61	197	258	13	5%
	Dublin North Centre	2	25	27	2	7%
	North West Dublin	17	106	123	7	6%
HSE Dublin & Midlands		96	156	252	21	8%
	Dublin South City	7	14	21	0	0%
	Dublin South West	17	39	56	0	0%
	Dublin West	8	23	31	0	0%
	Kildare/West Wicklow	6	26	32	0	0%
	Laois/Offaly	38	35	73	4	5%
	Longford/Westmeath	20	19	39	17	44%
HSE Dublin & South East		151	186	337	78	23%
	Carlow/Kilkenny	19	26	45	19	42%
	Tipperary S.R	16	29	45	8	18%
	Waterford	17	15	32	15	47%
	Wexford	19	18	37	20	54%
	Dublin South East	17	26	43	3	7%
	Dublin South	16	22	38	5	13%
	Wicklow	47	50	97	8	8%
HSE South West		36	271	307	29	9%
	Kerry	3	14	17	6	35%
	Cork North	9	70	79	9	11%
	Cork North Lee	21	106	127	13	10%
	Cork South Lee	3	65	68	1	1%
	Cork West	0	16	16	0	0%
HSE Mid West		2	34	36	0	0%
	Clare	0	10	10	0	0%
	Limerick	1	12	13	0	0%
	Tipperary N.R	1	12	13	0	0%
HSE West & North West		10	70	80	23	29%
	Donegal	1	13	14	0	0%
	Sligo/Leitrim	5	21	26	23	88%
	Galway	0	6	6	0	0%
	Mayo	2	15	17	0	0%
	Roscommon	2	15	17	0	0%
Total		389	1127	1516	179	12%