



3rd October 2025.

Mr. Thomas Gould, T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ ref 50224/25

“To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the number of children currently overdue an assessment of needs in Cork; and the number of private assessments that have been funded in Cork in the past 12 months”.

Dear Deputy Gould,

The HSE South West Children's Disability Service has been requested to respond to your parliamentary question submitted to the Minister for Children Disability and Equality.

Children and young people born on or after 1st June 2002 who are suspected of having a disability can apply for an Assessment of Need (AON) under the Disability Act (2005). The Act provides for an assessment to determine if a child has a disability and any health and education needs arising from that disability.

The Assessment of Need process consists of two stages. Stage 1 involves a review of the application by an Assessment Officer. It is a combined desktop and information gathering exercise carried out by an Assessment Officer that includes receiving an application, acknowledging its receipt, ensuring the application is completed in full, checking the applicant's eligibility and requesting additional reports or information from the parents / applicant if they were not supplied with the application.

Where appropriate, Stage 2 commences when the child/young person is referred for a clinical assessment. In an effort to address waiting times, the Assessment Officers refer some children / young people to private providers who can undertake the necessary clinical assessments.



The Disability Act (2005) allows three months to complete Stage 1 of the process and a further three months for Stage 2.

In Cork, between Q2-2024 and Q2-2025 there has been a 62% increase in applications received for AON. There has been a 132% increase in applications received since 2023. This exponential increase in demand is set out in table 1 below.

Table 1: Increase in AON Applications in Cork between Q2-2024 & Q2-2025

Period	Number of Applications
Q1-Q2 (2023)	460
Q1-Q2 (2024)	835
Q1-Q2 (2025)	1,066

Notwithstanding the significant work done to increase the number of AONs completed in this region, the increased number of applications has had an impact on the numbers of AONs overdue to commence or complete. This is set out in table 2.

Table 2: AON Applications in Cork increase between 2023 & 2025

	Q2- 2024	Q2-2025
Overdue For Completion – No exceptional circumstances	797	1,268
Overdue to Commence Stage 1	26	67
Total	823	1,335

In the twelve months from September 2024, private providers in Cork have completed 839 clinical assessments required as part of the Assessment of Need process.

HSE South West acknowledges the lengthy waiting times that parents are experiencing under the Assessment of Need process. We sincerely regret that any child has to wait for an assessment and we fully appreciate the level of stress that families are experiencing due to these waiting times.

If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact my office.



Yours sincerely,

**Angela O'Neill,
Head of Disability Services,
HSE South West.**