

Dear

ATISN 22033 – Autism Assessments

Thank you for your request to the Welsh Government for information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) which was received on 18 October 2024. You referred to a previous Freedom of Information request (ATISN 16267) and requested for Welsh Government to provide the most recent version of the same figures to reflect the years 2022 and 2023. You requested:

1. What is the current waiting time, from referral to assessment, for a child awaiting an Autism assessment?
 - a) Please break down the information for the 7 health boards and specify the wait time.
 - b) If possible, please sort this data into male and female wait times.
2. How many children (under 18 years of age) in Wales are currently waiting for an assessment by children's neurodevelopmental (ND) services?
 - a) Of those children waiting, how many are waiting for an Autism assessment specifically?
 - b) Please break down the information for the 7 health boards.
 - c) Please provide the gender of children if possible.
3. What percentage of children were seen within the waiting time target of 26 weeks from referral to assessment in Wales?
 - a) Please provide data for 2022 and 2023
 - b) Please break down the information for the 7 health boards.
 - c) At what age does neurodevelopmental services begin assessing children for Autism in Wales?
4. In addition, could you please provide a breakdown for those waiting over 2 years, over 3 years and over 4 years?

Our Response

1. Welsh Government collect some data relating to waiting times for Autism assessment - see attached spreadsheet. The information collected is specifically around waiting to start an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) neurodevelopment assessment. However, it should be noted that waiting times data collected relates to ADHD and ASD combined.
 - a) See attached spreadsheet
 - b) Welsh Government does not collect this information.
2. As above. Welsh Government only collect waiting times data for ADHD and ASD combined and does not cover the whole ND service.
 - a) As above – see response 1

- b) As above – see response 1
 - c) Welsh Government does not hold this information.
- 3a) Welsh Government does not hold this information as only data on waiting times (i.e., those currently waiting for an assessment to commence) is collected and not how long children had waited for an assessment (activity data).
- b) Welsh Government does not hold this information.
 - c) There is no set age for neurodevelopmental services to begin assessing children for Autism in Wales. The need for an assessment is based on clinical judgement.
4. Welsh Government does not hold this information, as the data held covers those waiting in grouped waiting times bands, with the last being those waiting >52 weeks.

To note, the data presented in the attached spreadsheet is classed as 'Management Information', not official statistics, reflecting that it has not been collected for statistical purposes and is not regarded as reliable. Consequently, Welsh Government does not publish these figures. We advise they should not be treated as a reliable measure of waiting times for Wales as a whole or for Local Health Boards (LHB) individually due to issues with the quality and consistency of the data. Specifically:

- We are aware LHBs may interpret the data collection request in different ways, meaning different definitions can be applied. This would mean figures would not be comparable between health boards and the Wales totals would reflect a mix of different methods.
- We are aware of a possibility of some duplication in the data, with individual referrals being reported multiple times.

Next Steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow

Cheshire
SK9 5AF

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely,