

QUALITY & PATIENT SAFETY AUDIT FINAL AUDIT REPORT – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Audit Title:	An Assessment of the Compliance by Assessment Officers and Assessors with the HIQA adopted Standards for the Assessment of Need process under the Disability Act 2005		
Audit Number:	QPSA0182011		
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Audit Sponsor:	Ms. Edwina Dunne – Director of Quality & Patient Safety Audit		
Source of Evidence	Type	Location	Date
	Pre-site visit questionnaire issued to all assessment officers and assessors at six local health offices (LHO) selected for audit.	Louth LHO Dublin West LHO Clare LHO Galway LHO Cork South Lee LHO Wexford LHO	05 – 10 May 2011
	Site visits (interviews with key staff and review of a random sample of AON files).	Louth LHO Dublin West LHO Clare LHO Galway LHO Cork South Lee LHO Wexford LHO	20 May 2011 08 June 2011 25 May 2011 27 May 2011 30 May 2011 02 June 2011
	Telephone survey with a random sample of parents/guardians from each LHO area selected for audit.	Louth LHO Dublin West LHO Clare LHO Galway LHO Cork South Lee LHO Wexford LHO	June 2011
Date of Issue of Final Report:	05/09/2011		

1. AUDIT BACKGROUND/RATIONALE

Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005ⁱ provides eligible applicants with:

- the right to a full assessment of health needs occasioned by their disability without regard to resources available or capacity to provide services to meet those needs;
- a statement of the services that will be provided to meet those needs; and
- access to a redress system including an independent Disability Appeals Officer.

Implementation of Part 2 of the Disability Act commenced on the 01 June 2007 for children under five years of age.

An additional provision of Part 2 of this Act was the setting of appropriate standards for carrying out the *Assessment of Need* (AON). Pending the establishment of the Health Information Quality Authority

(HIQA), standardsⁱⁱ were prepared jointly by representatives of the health and education sectors and subsequently adopted by the Board of iHIQA in May 2007. To date there has been no independent monitoring by HIQA of the implementation of the Standards for the *Assessment of Need*. A review (unpublished) of the implementation of Part 2 of the Disability Act has been undertaken by the National Disability Unit (NDU) but compliance with the Standards for the *Assessment of Need* was considered outside the scope of that review.

Given the length of time that has elapsed since the introduction of the Standards for the *Assessment of Need* and considering that the process is well established and embedded in the delivery system the HSE Assistant National Director (AND) for Disability Services has determined that an audit of the compliance of the process with these standards is opportune. The AND for Disability Services therefore requires assurance, both in terms of ensuring high quality care and in terms of governance that the Standards for the *Assessment of Need* are being complied with in accordance with the legislation.

Assessment of the compliance of the AON process against the HIQA adopted Standards for the *Assessment of Need* will complement and inform future development of this process.

2. AUDIT OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this audit are to:

1. Determine the level of compliance by assessment officers with the HIQA adopted Standards for the *Assessment of Need*;
2. Determine the level of compliance by assessors with the HIQA adopted Standards for the *Assessment of Need*;
3. Identify gaps in compliance in objectives 1 and 2 above;
4. Make recommendations on good practices to achieve compliance.

The main focus of the audit is on Standards 1 (Person-Centred Approach) and 5 (Co-ordination of the Assessment of Need) and it is the health needs only of the child that are being addressed.

3. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

The audit team identified limitations within the standards themselves which militated against a conclusive determination of overall compliance. The lack of supporting documentation/guidance underpinning the standards led to an over-dependence on subjective measures and verbal accounts to determine compliance.

Standard 1 – Person-Centred Approach

The audit team found a significant level of compliance by assessment officers and assessors in relation to certain criteria pertaining to Standard 1 at five of the six sites audited as follows:

- (a) the provision of information on the *Assessment of Need* process to the parents/guardians;
- (b) the inclusion of the parents/guardians in every step of the process and the satisfaction of parents/guardians with same;
- (c) the provision of a comprehensive *Assessment of Need* report to the parents/guardians;
- (d) the treating of parents/guardians and their child with respect and dignity which was affirmed by the parents/guardians.

The main issue that arose in relation to non-compliance was the reported lack of access to rooms including rooms suitable for conducting the various clinical assessments required. At one site a number of parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of communication on the length of time for assessments and the prolonged waiting time for these assessments. It was also submitted by participants at this site that the assessment report can be 'out-of-date' by the time it is received by the family. These local issues are discussed in the individual site reports.

Standard 5 – Co-ordination of the *Assessment of Need*

The audit team found more limited evidence of compliance by the assessment officers and assessors across the sites audited in relation to Standard 5. The main deficits identified include:

- (a) a sub-optimal level of multidisciplinary working particularly within HSE Primary Care (i.e., where assessors are not working as part of a defined multidisciplinary team);

- (b) lack of documented procedures and formal pathways of communication in relation to the requesting and co-ordinating of assessment requests at some sites;
- (c) a difficulty in accessing assessments from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) at some sites;
- (d) assessors with no training in the Guidance for Assessors, HIQA Standards and Children First Guidelines.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

NATIONAL DISABILITY UNIT

Standards

1. The National Disability Unit should consult with the Department of Health and Children and HIQA regarding a formal comprehensive review of the HIQA adopted Standards for the *Assessment of Need*. At a minimum the standards should be reviewed:
 - (a) to include tangible requirements (e.g., supporting documentation/guidance) for local implementation and subsequent monitoring of compliance;
 - (b) for elements of overlap and should be consolidated where appropriate.

Training

2. It is opportune for the National Disability Unit to review the training programme and the delivery of training on the Disability Act 2005 (Part 2), the Assessment of Need process and the HIQA adopted Standards for the *Assessment of Need*. Consideration should be given to the regionalisation of training.

Processes/Multidisciplinary Approach

3. The National Disability Unit should:
 - (a) devise a checklist for the initial meeting between the assessment officer and the parents/guardians. This checklist would serve as (1) a reminder of what information on the *Assessment of Need* process needs to be provided to the parents/guardians and (2) evidence of what information has been provided to the parents/guardians;
 - (b) amend the 'standard letter' sent to each potential assessor to include reference to the HIQA Standards for the *Assessment of Need* and the Guidance for Assessors document;
 - (c) encourage the use of the joint assessment report template (Appendix 3 – General Guidance for Assessors document) that was devised by the NDU for use by assessors.

Communication

4. A formal document management/control system should to be introduced by the National Disability Unit. This system should be created in line with the HSE's policy, procedures and guidelines format.
5. The National Disability Unit should:
 - (a) set up a website/hub which contains all updated policies, procedures and guidelines. This website/hub could also serve as a repository for agreed assessment tools;
 - (b) issue a periodical 'newsletter' or web-based type communiqué to assessment officers, assessors and any other persons involved in the *Assessment of Need* process. This would be helpful in advising of changes or updates to the process.

LOCAL HEALTH OFFICES AUDITED

Training

6. The Assessment Officer should ascertain who has not received training on the *Assessment of Need* process and arrange training where required. Formal training should be scheduled at regular intervals thereafter for new staff and for the provision of updates to policies/procedures/guidelines.
7. The Local Health Office should ensure that all persons (where applicable) who have not completed training in Children First Guidelines attend a training programme as a matter of urgency.

Processes/Multidisciplinary Approach

8. To support a multidisciplinary approach and facilitate better co-ordination of the assessments Primary

Care should allocate time slots each month for the discussion of *Assessments of Need* and each 'team' allocated an assessment request should nominate a link person to co-ordinate between team members and the Assessment Officer.

9. To support a multidisciplinary approach and to aid with the management and co-ordination of assessment requests the use of a protected shared drive or an ICT solution like the Change Hub on HSE LanD should be used by the Local Health Office. This would facilitate the sharing of documents, collaboration on reports and the recording of the status of *Assessments of Need* in progress.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings the audit team conclude that while the standards reflect good clinical practice and are well-meaning in intent a comprehensive review is opportune. The team also submit that while there is strong evidence of a person-centred approach the preferred multidisciplinary approach is sub-optimal particularly in relation to Primary Care and can only be achieved if there are well defined and well resourced multidisciplinary teams in place and where there are effective supports in place to support the cohesive collaboration and co-ordination of these teams.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The audit team wish to acknowledge the cooperation and goodwill afforded them by all persons who participated in the audit.

ⁱ Office of the Attorney General (2005) Disability Act 2005. Irish Statute Book. Available at <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2005/en/act/pub/0014/index.html> [Accessed June 2011].

ⁱⁱ Health Information Quality Authority (HIQA). Standards for the *Assessment of Need*. May 2007.