

30 May 2022

[REDACTED]

Re: Official Information Act request – Autism Data - ADHB Ref: 20220228-1216

I refer to your Official Information Act request dated 3 May 2022 requesting the following information:

1. How many autism spectrum disorder (ASD) assessments have been undertaken in the last ten years through the ADHB? Broken down by year, sex and age (under or above 18)?
2. How many people have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) through the ADHB in the past ten years? Broken down by year of diagnosis, and sex and age (under or above 18) of the person diagnosed?
3. Over the past ten years what has been the average wait time for an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis through the ADHB? Broken down by year?
4. Over the past ten years what has been the average number of people on the waitlist with suspected, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the area? Can this be broken down by sex?
5. How many people are currently on the waitlist with suspected autism spectrum disorder (ASD)? Can this be broken down by sex?

#### Response

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is assessed and diagnosed either through Starship Children's Health, or through specialist Mental Health and Addictions (MH&A) Services.

Please note that patients referred to Starship may be seen or diagnosed by a number of specialties. These outpatient visits aren't coded, so we are not able to extract diagnosis data for Autism Spectrum Disorder without reviewing individual patient notes. Manually reviewing the notes of all patients seen by these specialties at Starship Child Health is not feasible. Due to the sensitivity of this information, frontline clinical staff would need to review individual clinical files over the course of 10 years and it would not be appropriate to use a contractor to review the records. This would take the frontline staff away from their clinical work and prejudice our ability to provide core clinical services.

We have considered whether charging or extending the timeframe for responding to this aspect of your request would assist us in managing this work and have concluded it would not. We have, therefore, determined to refuse this element of your request under Section 18(f) of the Official Information Act - the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

However, we can advise that we aim to provide a First Specialist Assessment (FSA) within 6 weeks. Time to diagnosis ASD after a FSA would typically be two to three months. So in general, the time from referral to diagnosis for ASD is three to five months.

The data presented below is people assessed and diagnosed with ASD in Auckland DHB's MH&A directorate. Please note that, for the reason explained above, this data does not reflect the total numbers of people assessed and diagnosed with ASD. The outpatient workload of non-mental health services is not included.

Please note that the total numbers of people assessed and diagnosed with ASD, would be greater, given the outpatient workload of non-mental health services and the fact that data is not included here.

**1. How many autism spectrum disorder (ASD) assessments have been undertaken in the last ten years through the ADHB? Broken down by year, sex and age (under or above 18)?**

For mental health services, we are unable to identify what types of assessments are completed, but we are able to report on the outcome of assessments and so this information is supplied in response to Q2. This part of your request is refused for the reasons stated in our introduction to this response, citing s18(f) of the Official Information Act - the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

**2. How many people have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) through the ADHB in the past ten years? Broken down by year of diagnosis, and sex and age (under or above 18) of the person diagnosed?**

For MH&A, the following table shows how many people have had a recorded diagnosis of ASD over this period. Each individual is only counted once, and the year stated is the year in which they were first diagnosed. Age is that at the first diagnosis.

Calendar Years	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Under 18y</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>21</b>
Female	11	8	10	9	15	9	19	11	13	9
Male	44	41	35	35	43	38	41	29	30	12
<b>18y &amp; older</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>16</b>
Female	2	3	6	2	10	2	13	7	5	4
Male	8	9	10	10	18	6	17	15	18	12

**3. Over the past ten years what has been the average wait time for an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis through the ADHB? Broken down by year?**

For MH&A, the data below is based on the data for those individuals identified in Q2. Wait time to ASD diagnosis is not possible to answer, as a diagnosis may occur at different time points following referral. This part of your request is refused under s18 (e) of the Official Information Act because the information is not held by Auckland DHB.

The data that follows is a calculation of the average time, in days, from referral to the first face-to-face contact for those with an ASD diagnosis.

Calendar Years	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Under 18y</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>29.3</b>	<b>35.6</b>	<b>34.5</b>	<b>70.1</b>	<b>74.7</b>
Female	30.1	19.1	8.3	12.3	25.9	22.7	39.8	25.5	76.3	126.8
Male	38.1	31.0	19.0	30.4	28.3	30.9	33.6	37.9	67.0	27.8
<b>18y &amp; older</b>	<b>114.3</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>384.7</b>	<b>57.4</b>	<b>25.1</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>12.4</b>
Female	507.0	5.0	940.8	14.0	34.8	9.5	7.3	20.8	3.6	29.0
Male	35.8	21.0	13.9	66.1	19.4	15.3	14.8	13.0	6.6	9.6

**4. Over the past ten years what has been the average number of people on the waitlist with suspected, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the area? Can this be broken down by sex?**  
 For MH&A, we refer you to the data provided in response to Q3 above, which is a proxy for this question. We are not able to provide this specific information and are refusing for the reasons stated above, citing s18(f) of the Official Information Act - the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research. We can advise you that for most of the previous 10 years there has not been a waitlist per se.

**5. How many people are currently on the waitlist with suspected autism spectrum disorder (ASD)? Can this be broken down by sex?**

As of 10 May 2022 there were 11 people (5 females, 6 males) on a waitlist for assessments for ASD. Please note that the waitlist has been impacted by Covid-19, as some assessments which need to be done face-to-face have had to be rescheduled.

We trust you find this information useful.

You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours sincerely,



Ailsa Claire OBE  
 Chief Executive