



## **Statement : HSE's Autism Assessment and Intervention Pathway Protocol**

The IASLT has engaged extensively with the HSE, alongside colleagues in other professional bodies, regarding the development of the HSE's *Autism Assessment and Intervention Pathway Protocol*. IASLT's primary objective throughout this consultation has been to ensure clinical safety, effectiveness, and robust support for both clinical practice and the autistic community.

IASLT remains fully committed to the vision of improved, timely, and equitable neurodevelopmental services in Ireland. We also welcome the HSE's commitment to introducing access to assessment for adults. The publication of this protocol represents an initial step and we welcome an aligned approach to assessment.

The emphasis within the protocol on clinicians having the autonomy to determine the appropriate assessment procedures for each assessment, in line with their competency and the person's needs is welcomed. We will continue to engage proactively with the HSE Autism Assessment and Interventions Pathway Protocol group to develop the agreed competency framework for clinicians completing assessments to support safe clinical practice. There are also significant training requirements to ensure safe implementation of this protocol.

A protocol can only be safe if it is implementable, adequately monitored, and clinically sound. A structured implementation plan is critical. It is our continued recommendation that stronger governance structures are required. The appropriate resourcing of this pathway is necessary to ensure implementation is safe, effective and feasible. We continue to have concerns given the workforce challenges in the HSE and workforce restrictions in primary care particularly given that this will be an expanded service.

We continue to advocate for ongoing monitoring and structural resources required to protect both our clinicians and the families we serve.

IASLT recommends continued progression towards a neurodevelopmental model of assessment in the HSE and pathways into timely, appropriate interventions as required. A regular review of the protocol is also necessary to ensure alignment with feedback and evidence.

We continue to make ourselves available to engage with the Autism Assessment and Interventions Pathway Protocol group to advocate for the necessary revisions, monitoring, and structural resources required to protect both our clinicians and the families we serve.

**About IASLT:** *The Irish Association of Speech & Language Therapists (IASLT) is the recognized professional body for Speech and Language Therapists in Ireland.*



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