

## **Kerry's Eye**

By Tim Ryan, Oireachtas Correspondent

### **Deputies seeks longer processing time for Nano Nagle students**

Criticism of the short length of time taken for assessment of students from the Nano Nagle school in Listowel was voiced in the Dáil by Sinn Féin Martin Ferris and Fianna Fáil's John Brassil.

Deputy Ferris said school leavers are identified for the coming year and support services carry out an assessment and report to the adult day services. "This should be completed by December in order to have the services available by May," he said. "We have been told by both the services that were available, as well as the Nano Nagle school, that the school-level referral process starts too late. They recommend that the students need to know where they are going after Nano Nagle at least two years ahead of time. There is also a problem with funding in that additional funding may be needed."

Deputy Brassil said it often happens that a child will finish in the Nano Nagle school or any other special needs school and will not know the person who is going to be caring for them in the day services they are going into and will not know where the day services are. "There will be no preparation by the school and no opportunity for the school to meet the new carers," he said. "The whole thing is operating on a trial and error basis, which is not acceptable for the most vulnerable in our society. I ask the Minister of State, first, to bring the assessment process back 12 months and, second, to allow for a minimum of a six-month transition for the special needs child, the parents and the carers to get familiar with the new set-up and to make the transition as smooth as possible."

In response, Minister of State Patrick O'Donovan said 291 applications were submitted to the Cork Kerry community health care disability services under the 2017 school leavers process, including four from Nano Nagle school in Listowel.

"A placement was offered to each and every one of these applicants," he said. "However, 57 deferred their placement, chose another option or the individuals remained in school for another year. Notwithstanding that, the Cork and Kerry community health care organisation, CHO, acknowledges that there are some shortcomings in the school leaver process. In order to enhance the process, the CHO has approved the recruitment of two occupational guidance officers. These additional resources will support enhanced delivery of the school leaver process for 2018 and thereafter."

### **Ferris highlights plight of four Kerry families**

Four families in the North Kerry area have been left in limbo regarding respite care and residential facilities for adult in need, Deputy Martin Ferris told the Dáil. "They are awaiting the approval of an application by St. John of God Kerry services for funding to buy a centre and staff it in order to provide residential facilities for four very dependent adults in need," he said.

Deputy Ferris said all their parents are in their 70s and, at this stage in their lives, they are in complete trauma as a result of not knowing who will take care of their loved ones when they are gone, he said. “I have been on about this for quite a considerable time. I am told the application has been made. When will that application be dealt with and will the money be made available to provide the centre and the services necessary for these adults in need of full-time care?”

In reply, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said he did not know. “There is no legislation promised on the matter and it is not a specific Programme for Government commitment but I will ask the Minister of State, Deputy Finian McGrath, to respond to the Deputy,” he said.

### **Suggestion to fit speed limiters in cars**

The notion of fitting speed limiters to cars while they are being driven by those on provisional licences was raised in the Dáil by Independent Deputy Danny Healy-Rae.

“The Minister for North Korea, red tape, new regulations and stiffer penalties has made an order to severely punish unaccompanied provisional drivers,” he said. “They have been waiting for driving tests for long periods. He clearly does not understand what it means to live in rural Ireland where people do not have access to public transport.”

There are speed limiters in lorries and buses and these could also be used in cars, he said. “These youngsters have to travel. I firmly believe that a young fellow is entitled to one chance and that every young fellow deserves that chance. If young fellows blot their copybooks, they can be nailed then but not before that.”

In response Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said it was not a bad suggestion. “The legislation will be before the House shortly,” he said. “The Deputy will have the opportunity to speak on it and, perhaps, table an amendment to that effect should he so wish. We should not, however, forget that 13 young people with learner permits, 11 of whom were unaccompanied, have died on our roads while driving this year. That puts the matter into perspective. People with learner permits drive all the time but 11 of the 13 who died were unaccompanied.”