

DÁIL ÉIREANN

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE IRISH LANGUAGE, GAELTACHT AND THE ISLANDS

COMHCHOISTE NA GAEILGE, NA GAELTACHTA AGUS NA NOILEÁN

Dé Máirt, 19 Meitheamh 2018

Tuesday, 19 June 2018

Tháinig an Comhchoiste le chéile ag 4 p.m.

The Joint Committee met at 4 p.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Teachtaí Dála / Deputies	Seanadóirí / Senators
Aindrias Moynihan,	Joe O'Reilly,
Fergus O'Dowd,	Brian Ó Domhnaill.
Éamon Ó Cuív,*	
Peadar Tóibín.	

* In éagmais / In the absence of Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher.

Teachta / Deputy Catherine Connolly sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

Seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge: An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí

Chairman: Cuirim fáilte roimh na hionadaithe ón Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí. Go raibh míle maith acu as ucht an cuireadh a ghlacadh. Cuirim fáilte roimh Deirdre Shanley, rúnaí cúnta, Joan McMahon, príomhfheidhmeannach, Eoin Brown agus Tadhg O’Leary. Tuigim go bhfuil siad mar phríomhoifigigh sa Roinn. Gabhaim míle buíochas dóibh. Níl aon leithscéal faighte againn ó aon bhall den choiste. Tá sé ar intinn againn éisteacht leis an gcur i láthair agus ceisteanna a chur. Ansin beidh cruinniú gearr príobháideach againn maidir le cúrsaí gnó. Tá taithí ag na finnétithe ar an gcóras ach ní mór dom fógra a dhéanamh maidir leis an Acht um Chlúmhilleadh.

Ba mhaith liom a chur ar aird na bhfinnéithe de bhua alt 17(2)(l) den Acht um Chlúmhilleadh 2009, go bhfuil finnétithe faoi chosaint ag lánphribhléid maidir leis an bhfianaise a thabharfaidh siad don choiste seo. Má ordaíonn an coiste dóibh, ámh, éirí as fianaise a thabhairt i leith ní áirithe agus má leanann siad dá tabhairt amhlaidh, ní bheidh siad i dteideal dá éis sin ach pribhléid cháilithe i leith a gcuid fianaise. Ordaítear dóibh gan fianaise a thabhairt ach amháin fianaise a bhaineann le hábhar na n-imeachtaí seo agus fiafraítear díobh cleachtadh parlaiminte a urramú nár cóir, más féidir, daoine ná eintiteas a cháineadh ná líomhaintí a dhéanamh ina n-aghaidh, ina n-ainm, ina hainm nó ina ainm ar shlí a bhféadfaí iad a aithint. Ba mhaith liom na finnétithe a chur ar an eolas freisin go ndéanfar na ráitis tionscnaimh seo a gcuirfear faoi bhráid an choiste a fhoilsiú ar shuíomh gréasáin an choiste tar éis an chruinnithe seo. Meabhraítear do chomhaltaí an cleachtadh parlaiminte atá ann le fada nár chóir dóibh tuairimí a thabhairt maidir le duine atá taobh amuigh de na Tithe nó maidir le hoifigeach ina ainm, nó ina hainm, ar shlí a bhféadfaí iad a aithint.

Tá ráiteas tosaigh réitithe ag na finnétithe i mBéarla agus i nGaeilge. Tá deacrachtaí acu leis an nGaeilge. Níl mé ag iarraidh brú a chur ar aon duine. Tá siad níos compórdaí leis an mBéarla. Leanfaidh muid ar aghaidh i nGaeilge.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: Gabhaim míle buíochas don Chathaoirleach. I am the assistant secretary in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection with responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Department’s obligations under the Official Languages Act.

Chairman: Gabh mo leithscéal. An bhfuil sé ar intinn ag an bhfinné an rud go léir a léamh trí Bhéarla?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: I have a shortened version if the Chair prefers.

Chairman: Ní bheadh mé mórán sásta leis an rud trí Bhéarla mar is coiste Gaeilge é seo. Tuigim go bhfuil deacrachtaí ann ach, ar a laghad, an féidir leis an bhfinné an ceann is giorra a léamh?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: I am joined by my principal officer colleagues from the Department, Joan McMahon from corporate affairs, Tadhg O’Leary from human resources and Eoin Brown, who is the divisional manager for Galway. Given the time elapsed since the Department’s response to the original questionnaire from the committee in January 2017, I have provided the

committee with updated answers in Gaeilge agus in English. The answers give an overview of the services provided by the Department through Irish.

I would like to draw the committee's attention to the main changes made to the Department's response since the original questionnaire. Work is under way to develop a new Irish language scheme. It is hoped to bring this to the Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for approval before the end of the summer. The current language scheme covers the period 2015 to 2018. More details have been provided in our updated responses to the questionnaire on the monitoring of the implementation of the Department's commitments under the language scheme. The supports and services provided by the Department have also been updated.

There has been a welcome increase in the number of staff willing to provide services through Irish from 152 in January 2017 to 191 at the end of May 2018. In addition, two bilingual clerical officer posts have been filled by the Public Appointments Service and a request has been made for a further two executive officers and a higher executive officer from bilingual panels. The increase in the number of staff members willing to provide a service through Irish is welcome. They are supported by improved training and development supports provided by the Department's staff development unit. Professional Irish language training for all civil servants is now available exclusively via the online learning and development shared service. In addition, considerable advances have recently been made in the provision of digital services by the Department. These new services are also provided bilingually.

The opening statement I provided to the committee in advance also expanded on the information provided in the response to the questionnaire. The Department's provision of services through Irish is guided, but not restricted, by our obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003 and the Department's own language scheme. I am grateful to the committee for its understanding that my own level of Irish is not sufficient to speak as Gaeilge this afternoon. I welcome the opportunity provided by the committee to discuss the Department's response to the questionnaire that was submitted. My colleagues and I would be more than happy to answer any questions the committee has on these matters.

Chairman: An bhfuil aon duine eile ag labhairt? Sin é. Tá an Seanadóir Joe O'Reilly mar chéad chainteoir. Tá an focal "osréalach" ráite agam go minic anseo. Cuireann sé isteach orm nach bhfuil duine ar bith le Gaeilge ón Roinn anseo. Ar a laghad ba chóir go mbeadh duine amháin. Níl mé ag iarraidh aon duine a náiriú. Tá orm daoine a mhealladh chun an Ghaeilge a úsáid. An bhfuil duine sa Roinn le cumas Gaeilge nach bhfuil anseo? Bhí a fhios ag na finnítithe go raibh siad ag teacht os comhair an chomhchoiste um Ghaeilge. An bhfuil a leithéid de duine ann? Cén fáth nach bhfuil duine le Gaeilge anseo?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: As I said, we have more than 190 members of staff who are willing to provide a service through Irish, but responsibility for the oversight of the official languages scheme and our languages responsibilities rests with the corporate services area. That is my area of responsibility and, unfortunately, I personally am not able to converse through Irish at a business level. However, Mr. Brown, who is from our divisional office in Galway, can speak through Irish. Again, however, we wanted to provide a good overview of our implementation of the Irish language scheme and the responsibility for that rests in the corporate area. Staff in our offices who are more than willing to provide services throughout the Department have been identified.

Chairman: Tiocfaimid ar ais. Beidh ceisteanna ag chuile bhall. Má tá Gaeilge ag an Uasal

Brown, beidh fáilte roimh Gaeilge a chloisteáil. Tá 190 daoine ann le Gaeilge, an ea?

Mr. Eoin Brown: Tá 191 ann.

Chairman: Cén grád atá i gceist?

Mr. Eoin Brown: Tá oifigigh chléireachais, oifigigh fheidhmiúcháin, cúpla ardoifigeach feidhmiúcháin agus ceathrar nó cúigear phríomhoifigeach cúnta ann. Sin an méid.

Chairman: Cén grád atá ag an ceathrar nó cúigear?

Mr. Eoin Brown: Príomhoifigeach cúnta, nó AP.

Senator Joe O'Reilly: Ar dtús báire, cuirim fáilte roimh na finnétithe. Tá ceist shimplí amháin agam. Tá sí ceangailte leis an gceist dheireanach. Is é an rud céanna atá i gceist. Má ghlaonn éinne ó aon thaobh den tír ar an Roinn aon lá sa tseachtain ag iarraidh gnó a dhéanamh as Gaeilge, an bhfuil na finnétithe muiníneach agus cinnte go mbeadh siad ábalta é sin a dhéanamh agus go mbeadh na daoine ann chun freastal ar an duine sin?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: Yes we are confident that we can provide a service through Irish throughout our offices. Our Intreo centres, which deliver services throughout our divisions and regions, have identified staff who can provide a face-to-face service through Irish and who can provide a telephone service. Our centralised offices, which are based in places such as Sligo, Carrick-on-Shannon and Longford, also have staff available to provide services through Irish. Within the Department we have a list of all of the staff who are available to provide those services. They are available to answer any queries.

Senator Joe O'Reilly: An rud atá daoine á rá linn nó ná nach bhfuil sé éasca, go gcaitear fanacht ar dhuine agus nach bhfuil duine le fáil díreach má chuirtear glaoch ar an Roinn. Tá an finné ag rá linn nach bhfuil sé sin fíor agus go bhfuil daoine ann chun freastal ar gach éinne, an bhfuil?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: In terms of our services through Irish, we have four offices in Gaeltacht areas. All of these offices can provide a full face-to-face service through Irish. In all our other offices we endeavour to identify staff members who can provide services through Irish. If they are not available on a particular day or at the particular moment a customer calls in, the customer's details are taken and he or she will get a telephone call and receive service through Irish. That service will be provided in as timely a manner as possible.

Senator Joe O'Reilly: Sin ceart go leor dom.

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: Gabhaim buíochas leis na finnétithe as an tuairisc agus an cur i láthair. Bhí deis agam an ráiteas tosaigh a léamh níos luaithe agus tá cúpla ceist agam mar gheall air. Tuigim go bhfuil an Roinn ag déanamh athchóiriú ar an scéim Ghaolainne faoi láthair. Tá an scéim reatha ann ó 2015. An bhfuil an scéim reatha ag feidhmiú? Leis an scéim nua, an bhfuil an Roinn ag forbairt ar an gcéad scéim nó an bhfuil aon baol ann go mbeidh aon chulú uaithi? Tá dréacht ar fáil ag na finnétithe faoin dtráth seo. Tuigim go bhfuil siad chun an scéim nua a aontú i rith an tsamhraidh. Mar sin ba chóir go mbeadh tuairim mhaith ag na finnétithe ar an leagan amach a bheidh ar an scéim nua. An bhfeádfaidís a chinntiú an ag dul chun cinn nó ag cúlú atá siad maidir leis an scéim nua sin?

Maidir leis an líon daoine atá toilteanach seirbhís a chur ar fáil trí Ghaolainn, tuigim go bhfuil 191 duine ar an bhfoireann sin. As cé mhéad daoine a thagann an 191? An é an 6,700 a

luadh sa ráiteas tosaigh? Más sin an cás níl ach thart ar 2.8% den fhoireann ag freastal ar dhaoine síos, suas agus timpeall na tíre ar fad. Táim cinnte go mbeadh níos mó ná sin ag teastáil. An bhféadfadh na finnítithe an líon daoine atá ann san iomlán a chinntiú? Luadh daoine nua atá ag teacht isteach. Luadh go bhfuil beirt oifigeach cléireachais, beirt oifigeach feidhmiúcháin agus ardoifigeach feidhmiúcháin amháin le Gaolainn ag teacht isteach. Arís, as cé mhéad a thagann an figiúr sin? Cén céatadán é sin den dream ar fad atá ag teacht isteach sa Roinn? As cé mhéad a thagann an cúigear sin?

Cé go bhfuil an-chuid daoine ag plé leis an Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí, go minic ní fostaithe díreach na Roinne atá i gceist ach conraitheoirí. Cuir i gcás oifig áitiúil ina bhfuil bainisteoir agus a fhoireann féin. An bhfuil siad sin clúdaithe sna figiúirí agus faoin scéim Ghaolainne? Cad é an scéal maidir leo? Is iadsan na daoine atá amuigh ar an front line agus atá ag freastal ar an bpobal. Mar shampla, tá oifig nua á cur ar fáil i Maigh Chromtha. Beidh bainisteoir nua ann. An mbeidh an fhoireann a bheidh aige clúdaithe faoi scéim Ghaolainne na Roinne? Nílím ag piocadh go díreach ar Mhaigh Chromtha. Tá sé díreach mar an gcéanna i ngach aon bhaile eile timpeall na tíre. Bíonn conraitheoirí ag freastal ar an bpobal. An bhféadfadh na finnítithe soiléiriú a thabhairt maidir leis an dream sin?

Chairman: Gabhaim buíochas don Teachta. Bhí trí cheist ansin, nó trí ábhar ar aon nós. An bhfuil cúlú i gceist maidir leis an scéim teanga?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: To deal with the new Irish language scheme first, the Department's current scheme is still in force until the new one is put in place. We are operating under the current scheme until the new scheme is accepted and developed. Until it is published and agreed with the Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Deputy Joe McHugh, the old scheme will remain in place. The new language scheme is currently being prepared. There is absolutely no intention of weakening any of the commitments in the current scheme. We will be committed to providing quality services in Irish to our customers and we will be continuing to look at ways to enhance that. We recognise that there is always room for improvement but, as an organisation, we are committed to making every effort to deliver services in the best way we can. We have undertaken a consultation process in terms of developing the new scheme. We advertised publicly and looked for submissions in respect of its development. Those submissions are under consideration at the moment. We are looking at ways to improve and enhance our services at all times in terms of the delivery and development of our new language scheme. We hope to have the new scheme agreed and finalised by the end of the summer. The scheme will be published when it has been agreed with the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The Deputy asked about the number of staff who are delivering services. I mentioned a figure of 191 staff who have been formally identified as willing and able to provide a full level of business services through Irish. There are many other staff members throughout the Department who probably have a level of Irish but who are not in a position to, or do not want to, take up the responsibility of delivering that service. The names of those 191 staff members are available to all staff on the intranet. If there is a need for service, those staff members are contactable and are available to provide that service. We are very satisfied that a full service is available through Irish in our offices in Gaeltacht areas. Those 191 staff are spread throughout all of the Department's schemes and services areas, including many of our Intreo centres. In many of our locations we have identified staff who are available to provide service through Irish on the spot.

We are obviously looking to get more staff and to recruit more bilingual staff but we are dependent on panels being available through the Public Appointments Service. Sometimes

those Irish bilingual panels are not available. Sometimes we also recruit staff who have Irish through open competitions. They do not necessarily always come in through those bilingual panels. Where we can, we access those panels to recruit and identify staff. The figure of 191 who have been identified as willing to provide services through Irish comes out of our overall staff complement, but it is something we want to continue to grow, as we have done. The figure in January 2017 was 152. The figure has improved and we are looking to continue to grow it.

The Deputy also mentioned our contractors and asked whether they provide services through Irish, particularly in branch offices. It is a requirement that our contractors provide services through the medium of Irish where that is required. All offices in Gaeltacht areas must, at all times, have the capacity to provide services in the Irish language. The same commitments in terms of the Official Languages Act and our Irish language scheme apply to our contractors.

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: Gabhaim buíochas leis an bhfinné as an eolas. Teastaíonn uaim filleadh arís ar chúpla píosa den cheist. Go díreach, as cé mhéad a thagann an 191 duine? Cén iomlan atá ann?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: That figure comes out of the overall complement of 6,500. The Deputy is correct, approximately 3% of our overall complement have been identified as being able to provide business services through Irish. As I mentioned, there are many other people within the Department who are growing their skills in Irish through our learning and development supports. The Department is putting a lot of work into improving the level of supports for the learning and development of Irish through both staff development unit supports, such as the refund of fees scheme, and the Gaelchultúr courses that have been put in place on a shared services level for the whole Civil Service through OneLearning. The Department is always trying to encourage more staff to avail of those opportunities.

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: Tá cúig phost á bhfógairt. An é sin cúig as 100 nó cúig as 500? Cén líon post nua atá ann? Cé mhéad duine atá tugtha isteach? An bhfuil an cúigear sin fostaithe cheana féin?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: I will ask Mr. O’Leary, my colleague in the HR department, to talk about the recruitment process.

Mr. Tadhg O’Leary: I do not have the figures here. Some hundreds of staff come into the Department in a year. The five that we talked about----

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: An mbeadh tuairim 500 nó 600 nó 700? Táim ag iarraidh ballpark figure.

Mr. Tadhg O’Leary: It would be something between 300 and 400, but I can provide that detailed information to the committee. I am afraid I do not have it to hand.

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: Mar sin, tá thart ar 2% nó 3% arís tagtha isteach leis an gcúig phost seo atá á bhfógairt. An bhfuil sibh ag dul chun cinn, ag seasamh nó ag fanacht socair ar na figiúirí céanna? An bhfuil a fhios ag an Uasal O’Leary go bhfuil sé d’aidhm ag daoine go mbeadh thart ar 20% d’fhostaithe nua ag teacht isteach le Gaeilge acu? Ó na figiúirí atá luaite anseo agat, níl sibh ach fós ag seasamh réidh ar an 2% nó 3%, más ceart iad na figiúirí atá ag an bhfinné.

Mr. Tadhg O’Leary: It might be helpful to explain the framework that we use for recruiting staff through Irish. The figure of five is about right. We go out to all of our divisional managers

and other business owners and ask them to identify posts where they are asking us to fill those posts with functional bilinguals. One of the resources we have is the Public Appointments Service, PAS, panel. As I am sure the committee is aware, PAS has panels at clerical officer and executive officer level but not currently at higher executive officer, HEO, level. In the Department we have a very substantial number of higher executive officers. We have approximately 1,500 HEOs, which is a very large number.

The other source is through the general panels and from speaking to colleagues before this meeting it is very clear that we see numbers of staff arriving in through the general panels who are fluent in Irish. They would not have mentioned that - for whatever reasons - prior to arriving in the job. Sometimes people who are native speakers will turn up. That five will be the number of staff that they will be recruiting who will be proficient in Irish, that we are requesting specifically through the PAS panels. We are only at the second round of those PAS panels that were set up following the public service recruitment moratorium. It has been very difficult to source staff from those panels. I am sure the Deputy is aware of that issue. They have not been very large panels but we are actively sourcing staff through any panels that are available.

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: An bhfuil an cúigear fostaithe faoin tráth seo, nó cé mhéad den chúigear? B'shin an cheist deireanach.

Mr. Tadhg O'Leary: Some two of the five have been recruited and there are three requests outstanding.

Chairman: An Teachta Tóibín chun labhairt anois, le do thoil.

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: Táim ag iarraidh é sin a thuiscint i gceart. Tá an finné ag rá go bhfuil éileamh ar 400 post nua agus tá sibh ag iarraidh cúigear astu a bheith in ann a gcuid post a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge agus tá beirt fostaithe dá bharr sin.

Mr. Tadhg O'Leary: The number of requests for people specifically from functional bilingual panels from PAS is five. Generally-----

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: Cé mhéad den ghrúpa nua atá tar éis teacht isteach?

Mr. Tadhg O'Leary: How many people are-----

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: Cad é an comhréir? Cúigear as cé mhéad? Cad é an céatadán?

Mr. Tadhg O'Leary: I do not have the exact number but some hundreds of staff come into the Department each year.

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: Má chuirim glao ar aon uimhir as do Roinn ag an mbomaite seo, ní bheidh duine ag freagairt an ghutháin sin as Gaeilge. An rud a tharlódh ná go ndéarfaí ar thaifead meaisín nach bhfuil an Roinn in ann glao a ghlacadh faoi láthair agus go gcuirfear glaoch ar ais chomh luath agus is féidir. Tiocfaidh duine ar ais i ndiaidh lá nó dhá lá. Is gníomhaí Gaeilge mise agus níl mé chun an uimhir Ghaeilge a roghnú arís mar go bhfuil mé ag iarraidh mo chuid gnó a dhéanamh anois. Cén fáth go mbeinn ag iarraidh uimhir a roghnú a chuirfeadh moill dhá lá nó lá amháin orm chun rud éigin a dhéanamh? I ndáiríre, is bac é gan duine a bheith ar an taobh eile den líne, agus is slí í chun stop a chur ar dhaoine glao a chur ar an Roinn nó ar aon cheann de na seirbhísí a dhéanamh as Gaeilge. B'shin an fhadhb atá ann. Ní féidir le duine seirbhís trí Ghaeilge a chur ar siúl le 190 as 6,500 duine i dtír den mhéid seo. Níl sé indéanta ar chor ar bith. Beidh go leor daoine ar saoire nó as láthair in aon lá amháin as

na mílte glaonna atá curtha chuig Roinn na bhfinnéithe.

Is í an fhadhb atá ann nó an cleachtadh atá ann i gceann de na Ranna is mó nó nach bhfuil seirbhís i nGaeilge ar fáil don ghnáthshaoránach agus is léir, má tá an Roinn ag iarraidh cúigear a chur leis na céadta sin, nach bhfuil an Roinn ag iarraidh go mbeidh seirbhís as Gaeilge ar fáil d'aon duine sa tír seo freisin. Tá sé fíor-shoiléir nuair atá beirt faighte agaibh, i ndáiríre, is ag dul siar atáimid nó ag seasamh san áit chéanna. Cuireann sé sin díomá ollmhór orm nach bhfuil fuinneamh níos láidre sa Roinn ina leith. Níl mé ag iarraidh a bheith diúltach mar gheall ar an nGaeilge agus is fuath liom a bheith ag rá an méid seo, ach táimid i ngéarchéim mar gheall ar an nGaeilge. Tá seans ann go gcaillimid an Ghaeilge mar theanga phobail sa ghlúin seo, nó b'fhéidir ar a laghad an ghlúin atá romhainn amach. Is Éireannaigh muidne go léir agus tá dualgais orainne stop a chur leis sin. Tá a fhios agam go bhfuil fadhbanna leis na painéil etc., ach cad is féidir linn a dhéanamh chun é sin a réiteach? Tá na finnéithe ag fáil úsáide as na painéil sin. Mura bhfuil na painéil sin ag obair sa tslí ba cheart is léir nach bhfuil na finnéithe uailmhianach ar chor ar bith mura bhfuil ach cúigear á lorg acu. Fiú leis an gcúigear sin, cad is féidir linn a dhéanamh chun fadhbanna na bpainéal a réiteach?

Tá go leor de na ceisteanna freagartha ag an bhfinné faoin tráth seo ach mar gheall ar na seirbhísí atá le fáil sa Ghaeltacht, an bhfuil an finné ag caint faoi na hoifigigh atá lonnaithe sa Ghaeltacht amháin nó an bhfuil sé ag caint faoi na hoifigigh atá in aice leis an nGhaeltacht atá á n-úsáid ag muintir na Gaeltachta? Is féidir leis na finnéithe leanúint ar aghaidh lena bhfreagraí, mar tá go leor de na ceisteanna a bhí agamsa-----

Chairman: Is féidir leis an Teachta teacht isteach níos faide ar aghaidh, más mian leis.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: The Department is very committed to improving the bilingual services it offers on an ongoing basis and our ambition is not to have only five members of staff recruited from Irish language panels. That just happens to be the current figures. Our recruitment process is ongoing, and as Mr. O'Leary mentioned, the panels have not been available to us for that long.

The Department's services have two main types, our direct local services, mainly provided by our Intreo centres and the services provided by our centralised schemes. Dealing with the Intreo centres, which are located in every county, most of these currently provide a telephone or a face-to-face service through Irish, where staff members have been identified who can provide that service. In addition, our centralised schemes have staff available to provide a telephone service through Irish. We have more than 75 locations where we have an Irish service available, apart from the full service that is available in our Gaeltacht offices. We have four offices in Gaeltacht areas that provide a full face to face and direct Irish language service.

I draw attention to the Department's development in terms of digital services and the provision of same. More and more services are being offered online. The Department offers applications online for a lot of our schemes and many of our customers are choosing to go online. The Department has made the commitment that these services will be developed and delivered bilingually. In the written opening statement I provided, I mentioned that the services we have developed and put on these platforms have been developed in both Irish and English. It is our commitment that the new services will not go live without an Irish service being available.

The Department is focused on improving the services that are there. We recognise that there is more to be done and we can continue to improve. We are conscious that the figure of 191 is not as high as we would like it to be. It is something we are trying to improve both through

recruitment and through training and development. I have mentioned the training and development supports already such as refund of fees for people who want to study in their own time but we also give time and support to staff to undertake Irish courses via-----

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: Cé mhéad den fhoireann atá ag baint úsáide as na cúrsaí sin?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: We had a total of 71 staff who took up those courses last year but there would be a rolling number of people going through those programmes. The courses are offered at a variety of levels and those numbers constantly change.

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: Níos mó ná 1% de na daoine atá sa Roinn.

Chairman: Lean ar aghaidh leis na freagraí. An raibh aon cheist eile? Glaoim ar an Teachta Ó Cuív.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Ba mhaith liom a rá i dtosach báire, go gcuirtear an-seirbhís ar fáil i mBéarla ag oifigigh na Roinne. Tá siad an-chuimsitheach.

Ní bhaineann an dara ceist atá agam le Gaeilge ach le fiosracht. Céard é Intreo? Cé as a dtagann sé?

Chairman: Lean ar aghaidh ag cur na ceisteanna.

Senator Brian Ó Domhnaill: Iar-Aire.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Is ea ach ní raibh siad ann nuair a bhí mise i m'Aire. Thugamar go dtí oifigigh de chuid na Roinne Coimirce Sóisialaí orthu nuair a bhí mise mar Aire.

Tagraím do cheist na Gaeilge. Tógaimid uilig a úsáideann an Ghaeilge gach lá an bealach is éasca. I mo chás féin, tá Béarla chomh maith agam agus atá ag duine ar bith-----

Chairman: Tá sé cuibheasach maith.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tá sé réasúnta maith, D4, agus tá Gaeilge agam freisin. De bharr éascaíochta, tugtar ualach giolla na leisce, the lazyman's load air, déanann daoine an rud atá is éasca dóibh féin. Déanann pobal na Gaeltachta an rud céanna agus mar sin, mura bhfuil seirbhís ar fáil go héasca i nGaeilge, úsáidfidh siad an tseirbhís Bhéarla. An rud atá cruthaithe ná má tá seirbhís á chur ar fáil do dhuine atá líofa sa Ghaeilge, déanfaidh sé nó sí an gnó trí Ghaeilge. Mar sin, ó tharlaíonn sé go bhfuil Gaeilge ag an bhfoireann i m'oifig agus agam féin, úsáidimid an Gaeilge mar theanga go nádúrtha leis na daoine a thagann isteach chuig m'oifig i nGaillimh nó i gConamara. Má thagann Béarlóir isteach, úsáidimid an Béarla. Sin an slat tomhais. Dá mba rud é go raibh an tseirbhís ar ardchaighdeán ar fáil, an dá rogha mar a chéile ann agus éascaíocht cothrom ann, céard a d'úsáidfadh duine? Tá sé feicthe agam arís agus arís eile thar na blianta agus déarfainn go bhfeiceann an Teachta atá sa chathair an rud céanna - más mar sin é, is Gaeilge a d'úsáidfadh pobal na Gaeltachta. Mura bhfuil sé ar fáil mar sin, iompóidh siad ar an mBéarla. Sin an fhíric.

Glacaim leis go bhfuil na hAchtanna thar a bheith teann faoi láthair. Ba cheart go mbeadh níos mó daoine ann ach níl. Is é an fhírinne ó thaobh pleanála de ná go bhfuil easpa pleanála uafásach. Dá mbeadh cúigear nó deichniúr ann le Gaeilge, ba cheart iad a chur san áit is mó go mbeadh teagmháil acu le pobal na Gaeltachta, tiocfadh an dá oifigeach leasa pobal ar ais. Sin an rud a bhíodh ann. Bhíodh triúr ag plé le pobal Conamara theas. Bhí duine i gCill Chiaráin, duine ar na gCeathrú Rua agus duine ar na hOileáin Árainn. Ba cainteoirí dúchasacha Gaeilge

iad. Anois má théann duine isteach ag na hoifigí leasa pobal i nGaillimh, is dócha go mbeidh orthu Béarla a úsáid. Táimid tar éis dul ar chúl go mór ó thaobh plé laethúil daoine leis an seirbhís leasa pobal. An dara aicme duine is mó atá ag plé go laethúil le pobal na Gaeltachta ná na cigirí leasa shóisiala, the social welfare inspector nó mar a thugann pobal na Gaeltacht orthu “na gaugers”. Is iad an dream a thagann thart agus a chomhaireann na ba, na caoirigh, na deontais, na costanna feirme agus mar sin de. Is é mo thaithí le gairid ná gur daoine gan Gaeilge ar a dtoil acu iad na daoine atá ag déanamh na hoibre sin. Ceann de na rudaí a bhí i gceist le bheith sa phleananna teanga ná go ndíreófaí na hacmhainní san áit is mó a bhí plé leis an bpobal.

Tuigim gur cineál crannchur atá anseo ach bíonn an-phlé go deo ag m’oifig leis an oifig eolais áitiúil. Tá sé iontach ar fad mar sheirbhís. Ní fhéadfaí locht ar bith a fháil air ach bhí an tráth ann go raibh Gaeilge acu agus aon phlé a rinneamar leis an oifig sin, bhíodh sé i nGaeilge ach nuair nach bhfuil Gaelgeoirí ann, déanaimid i mBéarla é. Tá na daoine ann an-deas agus níl mé ag iarraidh iad a mhaslú ach ansin tagann daoine ar ais chugainn ag rá nach bhfuil éinne ag baint úsáide as an tseirbhís trí Ghaeilge, ach nuair nach bhfuil an tseirbhís ann go héasca agus chomh héasca céanna leis an mBéarla, ní bhainfidh siad.

An gceapann na finnétithe go bhfuil éinne le Gaeilge agus fonn orthu í a labhairt, mar atá ag muintir na Gaeltachta, ag déanamh teagmháil leis an oifig agus ag labhairt Béarla? Ní tharlaíonn sé mar tuigeann siad go bhfuil sé chomh héasca céanna an gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge agus atá sé trí Bhéarla.

Tá fadhb ollmhór sa Státchóras mar go hiondúil nuair a fhaigheann duine foirm i nGaeilge, bíonn sé scríofa i mBéarla i dtosach báire agus bíonn scata i dtosach le léamh i mBéarla, mar nuair a dhéantar aistriú ar rud ar bith ó theanga amháin go teanga eile, is minic go n-aistrítear na focail, seachas an brí agus is minic go mbíonn na foirmeacha Gaeilge sách deacair le tuisint. Níl siad scríofa i nGaeilge an phobail. Bíim thiar ag mo chlinicí agus bíonn an fhoirm Ghaeilge agus Béarla ann agus muid ag féachtaint ar an bhfoirm i mBéarla ag iarraidh an mheabhair a dhéanamh den fhoirm Ghaeilge. Ní bhíonn a fhios ag gnáthphobal na Gaeilge céard atá i gceist leis an téarmaíocht. Sílim go bhfuil réiteach an-simplí air seo. Nuair a bhí mé sa Roinn eile - níor éirigh liom é a dhéanamh faoi thaobh an leasa shóisialaigh de - an smaoinemh a bhí ann ná nuair a bhí foirmeacha á cumadh, foirmeacha Béarla san áireamh, mar chuid den cheart custaiméara caithfí iad a bheith inúsáidte. An rud a dúirt mé leo a dhéanamh ná, dá mbeadh aon fhoirm nua á chumadh, ag brainse na binse mar shampla, go dtabharfaidís go hoifigeach cléireachais nó feidhmiúcháin ar an taobh eile den teach le féachtaint an raibh siad in ann é a líonadh. Mura mbeidís siúd in ann é a líonadh agus iad ina státseirbhísigh, is ar éigean go mbeadh an pobal in ann é a líonadh. Ba cheart na foirmeacha Gaeilge a thabhairt do chainteoirí dúchasacha Gaeilge agus painéal beag acu a chur le chéile. Tá daoine sa Roinn gur cainteoirí dúchasacha iad. Is fíor dóibh siúd. Mura dtuigeann daoine sa chóras é, is ar éigean go dtuigfidh daoine taobh amuigh den chóras é.

Tá dhá ceist bheag deiridh agam.

Chairman: Cé mhéad é sin?

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Thart ar 30.

Chairman: Triocha, dhá chéad.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Céard a deirtear nuair a bhíonn na cait amuigh?

Chairman: Sin an-rud.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Bíonn na muca ag rince.

Chairman: Is dócha. Dhá ceist deireanach.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Cén dualgas atá ar Seetec seirbhís a chur ar fáil trí Ghaeilge sa Ghaeltacht mar tá baint ollmhór acu siúd le cúrsaí Gaeilge?

Is breá an rud é go bhfuil daoine ag foghlaim Gaeilge sa Roinn agus ag déanamh cúrsaí Gaeilge ach is corruair riamh a chonaic mé éinne - daoine fásta - nach bhfuil Gaeilge acu ag foghlaim Gaeilge chomh maith sin agus a raibh siad in ann í a úsáid go léibhéal áirithe. Tá eisceachtaí ann ach go ginearálta, ní leigheasann sé sin an fhadhb mar tá sé an-deacair teanga a fhoghlaim nuair atá duine ag fás aníos, go mbeadh sé chomh maith agus atá an Béarla acu. Cén fáth go mbeadh an cainteoir dúchasach ag iarraidh labhairt le daoine le Gaeilge briste? Mar sin, sílim go gcaithfidimid breathnú isteach ar earcaíocht agus ar na daoine a chur sna háiteanna agus na poist is mó a bhfuil plé acu leis an bpobal a bheadh ag iarraidh seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge. Ba cheart sprioc a dhéanamh do na poist áirithe sin. Is sin a bhí i gceist leis na pleananna teanga agus sin an chuid den phlean nár cuireadh i bhfeidhm riamh.

Chairman: Tosnóimid leis an ceist is éasca. Cad is brí le Intreo?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: I will ask my colleague Mr. Brown who is a divisional manager delivering the Intreo service to explain what it is.

Mr. Eoin Brown: Intreo is a holistic service across all interactions that-----

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: It is what we used to call the local social welfare office ach an ceist atá agam ná cé as a thagann an focal “Intreo”?

Mr. Eoin Brown: Níl a fhios agam. B’fhéidir “in treo”-----

Chairman: Céard é an brí atá leis?

Mr. Eoin Brown: Níl aon focal, there is no meaningful-----

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Social welfare officers a bhí againn agus go tobann chonaic mé an téarma seo. Bhí chuile rud do mo chur amú i m’intinn. Is cuma, níl ann ach pointe beag.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: It means “in the direction of”. It is to convey a meaning of the overall holistic service that the Department provides in terms of enabling people to access services, particularly their employment support services and activation services to enable and assist people returning to work.

Chairman: Cén teanga atá i gceist: Béarla, Gaeilge nó Laidin?

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Ní raibh ann ach píosa spraoi. Is cuma ach bhí mé ag fiosrú faoin mBéarla.

Chairman: Lean ar aghaidh leis na ceisteanna.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tá sé cosúil le Tusla: níl a fhios againn cé as a tháinig sé.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: In terms of the responsibility our contractors such as Seetec have towards the provision of services through Irish, all of our contractors who provide services on behalf of the Department have the same responsibilities in terms of our commitments under the

official language scheme and the Irish language scheme. If those offices are in Gaeltacht areas they must have the capacity to provide service in Irish and I understand that they do where they are located in Gaeltacht areas.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tá rud neamhghnách i nGaillimh. Tá mé i mo chónaí ann. Tá an Ghaeltacht is mó sa tír ann agus an Ghaeltacht is mó go labhraítear Gaeilge inti ach níl aon oifig leasa shóisialaí sa Ghaeltacht. Tá an ceann a bhí in Uachtar Ard imithe go dtí an Ghalltacht agus tá ceann sa gClocháin ach níl aon ceann i nGaeltacht Chonamara, rud atá an-aisteach. Bhí mé ag iarraidh é sin a leigheas cheana ach níor leigheasadh é.

Mr. Eoin Brown: Tá an ceart ag an Teachta. Níl ach dhá oifigeach sa Chlocháin agus i nGaillimh féin agus gan aon oifig eatarthu ach tá oifig Seetec ar an gCeathrú Rua. Sin an méid atá againn.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: I accept the Deputy's point in the context of forms being in Irish. The Department always examines the forms we produce in terms of their complexity and we try to ensure that we produce forms that are as simple as possible to understand in all languages and we have responsibilities to have those forms examined by The National Adult Literacy Agency, NALA, in terms of literacy and then we translate those forms in order to provide the Irish version of the form. The Deputy's suggestion of having native Irish speakers look at the forms or providing them to other members of staff within the Department who are native Irish speakers and working in different areas is something that we could take on board in the context of the development of our new language scheme to make sure that our forms are as accessible as possible. It is something that the Department always tries to do with all of the forms and services we provide.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tá na hacmhainní an-teann. Níl mórán foirne le Gaeilge againn ach ní léir go bhfuil polasaí soiléir ann ag déanamh cinnte go bhfuil na hacmhainní sin á úsáid sa mhéid agus gur féidir san áit a bhfuil éileamh orthu. Mar shampla, dá gcuirfí oifig leasa phobail ag plé le muintir dheisceart Chonamara, labhródh 80% nó 90% dóibh Gaeilge ann gan dabht. Dá mbeadh na cigirí leasa shóisialaigh a bhíonn ag dul go deisceart Chonamara ina gcainteoirí dúchais Gaeilge, labhródh Gaeilge leo; bí 100% cinnte de sin. Ach nuair atá ar dhuine teacht isteach agus fanacht leath-lae ar thóir duine le Gaeilge, úsáidfidh siad Béarla. Dá mbeadh cúigear nó deichniúr ann is iad sin na poist chuí dóibh - an oifig eolais agus sna ceantair Gaeltachta - i nGaillimh, i dTír Conaill agus i gContae na Mí - na háiteanna is mó a bhfuil plé leis an bpobal leo agus úsáidfear Gaeilge leis na daoine sin lá agus oíche.

Mr. Eoin Brown: Tá cúig phost nua i nGaillimh. Thosaigh beirt cúpla mí ó shin agus táimid ag feithimh ar triúr eile. Beidh siad in ann seirbhís trí Ghaeilge a thabhairt ón oifig i nGaillimh.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Ó thaobh front-line, front desk services de, tá an t-éileamh is mó ar an oifigeach leasa pobail, an community welfare officer, CWO, mar a thugtaí orthu. Cé go bhfuil an lá imithe nuair a bhíodh an CWO lonnaithe sa Cheathrú Rua nó i gCill Chiaráin, má shiúlaim isteach san oifig i nGaillimh nó sa Chlochán, an mbeidh mé cinnte go mbeidh CWO ann le Gaeilge?

Cuireann na finnétithe daoine amach faoi chúram na sicíní, agus tá a fhios acu na rudaí a dhéanann siad. An mbeidh mé cinnte nuair a chuirfear duine amach go dtí an Spidéal nó go Baile na hAbhann go mbeidh Gaeilge acu? B'shin an dá phost is mo sa Roinn a bhfuil plé acu ó la go lá leis an bpobal.

Mr. Eoin Brown: Is grád HEO iad na grádanna CWO agus cigire leasa sóisialaigh. Níl aon duine le fáil againn. We cannot get a panel and there is no panel sa PAS le poist ar son HEOs. There is nothing available. If there were, we would take them and we would use them in Galway. Na daoine a bhí ag obair roimhe sa Ghaeltacht, they have all retired and we were not able to replace them with HEOs with Irish.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tá sé sin soiléir, an-úsáideach agus an-fhéarálte.

Senator Brian Ó Domhnaill: Go raibh maith ag na finnétithe as a bheith anseo. Is cinnte gur Roinn mhór í an Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí, go bhfuil buiséad mór inti, gurb í an buiséad is mó as na Ranna Rialtais ar fad, go bhfuil seirbhísí tábhachtacha á chur ar fáil taobh istigh den Roinn agus go bhfuil ceangal láidir ag na daoine ann le gnáthphobal na tíre.

An bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge fostaithe sa Roinn le cúraimí náisiúnta Gaeilge, agus mura bhfuil, cén fáth? An bhfuil sé mar sprioc nó mar aidhm oifigeach Gaeilge a fhostú?

Is ceist phraiticiúil í an dara ceist níos mó ná rud ar bith eile. Ó thaobh an chórais atá taobh istigh den Roinn, má chuireann duine ríomhphost nó litir isteach ag an Roinn i nGaeilge, caidé an dóigh a dhéanfaí láimhseáil ar an nóta, an litir nó an fiosrúchán sin nuair nach bhfuil Gaeilge ag an duine atá ag plé leis an bhfiosrúchán sin? An bhfuil láraonad ann? An gcaithfidh an fiosrúchán sin a chur ar aghaidh? Cad é an polasaí nó an córas atá ansin?

Ó thaobh na ceiste deireanaí ón Teachta Ó Cuív i dtaca leis na HEOs, an deacracht iad a fhostú agus an t-éileamh atá ar HEOs le Gaeilge, cén fáth nach bhfuil breis HEOs á fhostú? An é go bhfuil bac nó cosc ón Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe breis HEOs a fhostú nó an rud é go bhfuil sé deacair daoine le Gaeilge a fhostú ag an leibhéal sin? Cad é go díreach an deacracht atá ansin? Cén fáth go bhfuil an t-éileamh ansin ach nach bhfuil na poist sin líonta?

Ó thaobh na bhfoirmeacha de, thug mé faoi deara sa fhreagra a thug na finnétithe don choiste go bhfuil obair mhaith ar siúl ag an Roinn ó thaobh na bhfoirmeacha go léir agus an tsuímh Idirlín agus go bhfuil gach rud dátheangach. Cuirim fáilte roimhe sin. An áit atá an dúshlán ná leis an líon daoine le Gaeilge atá fostaithe, níos lú ná 3%. Tá sé sin cothrom leis an bhfigiúr trasna an Státchórais ar fad. Is í an obair atá ar bun ag an gcoiste seo againne ná go bhfuilimid agus an Rialtas ag iarraidh go mbeidh níos mó daoine le Gaeilge fostaithe sa Státchóras agus iad in ann seirbhísí a chur ar fáil. Ceann de na spriocanna a bheidh sa Bhille úr atá le foilsiú ná moladh atá déanta ag an gcoiste seo maidir leis an mBille úr, is é sin go mbeadh Gaeilge ag 20% de na fostaithe úra sa Státchóras agus go mbeadh siad in ann seirbhís a chur ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge. An gcuirfeadh na finnétithe fáilte roimhe sin ó thaobh na rannóige corparáidí de sa Roinn? An bhfuil aon tuairim acu ar an sprioc sin? An mbeidh an Roinn in ann an sprioc sin a bhaint amach? B'fhéidir gur leor é sin anois.

Chairman: Lean ar aghaidh, le do thoil.

Senator Brian Ó Domhnaill: Ó thaobh Dhún na nGall de, tá Gaeltacht mhór i nDún na nGall agus tá a fhios agam cuid den fhoireann atá fostaithe agus cuid de ne hoifigigh atá ag plé leis na ceantair Ghaeltachta. Tá siad in ann seirbhísí a chur ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge. Cuirimse fáilte roimhe sin. Ag an am céanna, go ginearálta, trasna na Roinne ina iomláine, tá leibhéal na ndaoine atá in ann plé le fiosrúcháin Ghaeilge iontach íseal ar fad. Cad é an leibhéal caidrimh atá idir an Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí agus an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta, ansin i dtaca le spriocanna Gaeilge a bhaint amach? An mbíonn

cruinnithe rialta idir an rannóg chorparáideach agus an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta, mar shampla, i dtaca le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge taobh istigh den Roinn?

Chairman: An cheist maidir le hoifigeach Gaeilge i dtosach, le bhur dtoil.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: The Department's corporate services unit is the unit that has overall responsibility for co-ordinating, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Department's obligations under the Official Languages Act and the Irish language scheme. The section, which is headed by a principal officer, Mr. Joe McMahon, who is present, acts as a liaison with the office of an Coimisinéir Teanga and with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, on the implementation of our responsibilities. The section provides reports on an ongoing basis to the management board and any other information that is required regarding the implementation of our commitments and meeting our obligations. The Department reports on the delivery of services through Irish and the implementation of our scheme in our annual report.

Our relationship would involve regular contact with the office of an Coimisinéir Teanga, and it carried out a review in March 2017 of the implementation of the first year of the Department's language scheme. That review was very favourable to the Department overall in terms of the wide range of services that we provide, the fact that we provide all our scheme applications in Irish, and that we have a facility for responding to customers in Irish. The Deputy asked about when a customer writes to the Department in Irish by way of an email or letter. It is the policy of the Department to respond in Irish to any correspondence in Irish received from customers.

We also have a facility on our IT system that a customer can indicate their language preference. If a customer tells us that they want to be corresponded with through Irish, we can arrange that anything that goes out to that customer from the Department goes out in Irish. This will happen for any customer who has informed us of that and we do that in a very proactive way. If we receive something from a customer through Irish, we will also ensure that indicator is there and that we respond to that in Irish.

In terms of HEOs, and if the committee wants additional detail, my colleague, Mr. O'Leary, can respond, there is no direct or open recruitment at a central level to the HEO grade. It is not Irish or English related. There is no panel that exists. That is an agreement that is in place with the unions and is not related to the Irish language but to HEOs in general. Would Mr. O'Leary like to comment on this?

Mr. Tadhg O'Leary: HEO is not an entry level grade to the Civil Service and traditionally has not been. The Department is slightly unusual in that we have HEOs who are directly providing services, whereas most Departments would not expect that at the HEO level. If panels were to become available, however, whether they were interdepartmental or open, we would engage very directly and would be very interested in using those panels, because it is a difficulty for us as our only source for HEOs is interdepartmental or internal. As there is not an Irish language stream available, it does, as Mr. Brown was saying, raise difficulties where retirement takes place.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: Following up on the review that an Coimisinéir Teanga undertook on our scheme and the summary of information provided back to us, he said that based on the information supplied to him during the monitoring process, it was his opinion that continuous progress was being made by the Department in implementing the commitments of its second language scheme. The office of an Coimisinéir Teanga reviewed all of the commitments of the

scheme in that regard.

We also have an ongoing relationship whereby if any issues arise from members of the public and they bring them up with an Coimisinéir Teanga, with whom we have very close contact, we would resolve those very quickly.

Chairman: Céard faoi na foirmeacha agus an 20%?

Senator Brian Ó Domhnaill: Céard faoin 20% agus an t-oifigeach Ghaeilge? Ní bhfuair mé freagra air sin.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: The Irish language officer is not a specific officer. We have the corporate services unit with overall responsibility. We have an assistant principal there, Mr. Bill Ryan, who liaises directly with an Coimisinéir Teanga. We do not call him the Irish language officer.

Senator Brian Ó Domhnaill: He has other roles. Tá ról eile aige.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: Yes.

Senator Brian Ó Domhnaill: Céard faoin sprioc 20%?

Chairman: Tá an Seanadóir ag cur ceiste faoin 20%. An bhfuil an Seanadóir chun an cheist sin a chur arís, maidir leis sin?

Senator Brian Ó Domhnaill: Tá brón orm. An bhfuil aon tuairim ag na finnétithe faoin sprioc 20% maidir le hearcaithe úra?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: The Department can only respond if a target like that is set by central Government. It is not something the Department can decide to do. We try, as far as we can, to provide a wide service through Irish, and we do that within the resources that we have available.

Chairman: Tíocfaidh mé ar ais. An bhfuil an Teachta O'Dowd ag iarraidh teacht isteach?

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: Fáiltímid roimh na baill anseo agus molaim go bhfuil siad anseo ach b'fhéarr liom dá mbeadh níos mó ama againn. Cheap mé go raibh an cruinniú ag tosú ag a 5 in ionad a 4. Gabh mo leithscéal faoi sin.

Chairman: Ligfimid duit teacht ar ais.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: Bíonn seirbhís an-tapaigh nó níos tapúla uaireanta, nuair a bhíonn mé ag feitheamh le duine éigin atá ag obair in aon Roinn, má bhrúnn mé an uimhir as Gaeilge.

Chairman: Tá a fhios agam go bhfuil an Seanadóir ag imeacht, ach ba mhaith liom féin cúpla ceist a chur. Go raibh maith ag na finnétithe. Tá an-tábhacht ag baint lena Roinn - tá a fhios agam é sin - agus tá an buiséad is mó sa Rialtas aici, beagnach €20 billiún. Cuirfidh mé ceist faoi na rialacha céanna agus ligfidh mé do na finnétithe freagra a thabhairt

Dúirt na finnétithe go raibh teagmháil rialta agus caidreamh go minic acu leis an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta agus leis an gCoimisinéir Teanga. An bhfuil na finnétithe ar an eolas faoin tuarascáil a sheolamar, an comhchoiste seo, inniu maidir leis na fadhbanna atá ann ó thaobh earcaíochta de agus ó thaobh scéimeanna teanga de go háirithe. Ar lorg aon duine ón Roinn tuairimí na bhfinnétithe faoi na moltaí seo a tháinig ón gCoimisinéir Teanga, is iad sin nach bhfuil na scéimeanna teanga ag feidhmiú agus go bhfuilimid taobh thiar den Choimisinéir

Teanga go bhfuil gá le rudaí eile ar nós chóras na gcaighdeán?

An raibh caidreamh idir an Roinn agus an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta maidir leis na hathruithe atá beartaithe? Táimid ar tí, le cúnadh Dé, reachtaíocht nua a thabhairt isteach.

Tá rud eile agam maidir leis an scéim atá ag Roinn na bhfinnéithe faoi láthair. Cad iad na rudaí atá foghlamtha aici maidir leis an scéim seo atá ar intinn aici a athrú? Cad iad na laigí atá istigh ann?

Maidir leis an aonad corparáideach, cé mhéad duine atá san aonad sin le Gaeilge líofa? An bhfuil aon duine ann le Gaeilge nó aon leibhéal Gaeilge ann? Dúradh linn go soiléir go bhfuil an fhreagracht ar an aonad sin monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar an scéim teanga agus ar an nGaeilge. An bhfuil Gaeilge san aonad sin agus má tá, ca bhfuil siad inniu?

Maidir le hoifigeach Gaeilge, agus tá sé seo ráite ag an Seanadóir, ceapaim go mba chóir breathnú isteach ar oifigeach Gaeilge a earcú, duine le ról faoi leith, i measc ról eile, chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn, chun na fadhbanna a aithint, chun na rudaí dearfacha a aithint agus ansin leanúint ar aghaidh.

Tá sé ráite agam, agus táim braon ag éisteacht liom féin, go bhfuil géarchéim ó thaobh na Gaeilge de. Táimid anseo chuile choicís ag éisteacht le dreamanna os ár gcomhair ag cur in iúl chomh deacair is atá sé. Tá moladh tuillte ag na finnéithe mar Roinn agus níl mé iarraidh lochtanna fháil, ach ag an am céanna tá níos lú ná 2%, má tá mo chuid mata ceart, de na fostaithe le Gaeilge. Is é 6,730 an líon foirne atá ag Roinn na bhfinnéithe. Níl ag an Roinn ach 191 le Gaeilge, agus níl siad ar ghráid arda. Níl mé ag iarraidh, agus é sin a rá, drochmheas a tharraingt orthu ach é seo a shoiléiriú. Cén chaoi is féidir leis an Roinn seirbhísí ar an leibhéal céanna a chur ar fáil i mBéarla agus i nGaeilge? Sin ceart na ndaoine faoin mBunreacht.

Maidir leis an nGaeltacht is mó sa tír, agus luaigh mo chomhghleacaí an Teachta Ó Cúiv é seo, is í sin an Ghaeltacht i nGaillimh, níl aon oifig ag feidhmiú trí mheán na Gaeilge i gConamara. Abair liom go bhfuilim mícheart mar níl an Clochán sa Ghaeltacht agus níl an áit eile a luaitear sa Ghaeltacht. Cá bhfuil sé sin le feiceáil go bhfuil sé sin mar aidhm ag an Roinn, is é sin, duine le Gaeilge agus oifig a lonnú sa Ghaeltacht is mó sa tír, má ta sí i ndáiríre le seirbhísí a chur ar fáil?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: I will respond first to the development of our new language scheme and what we have learned from our existing scheme. In the context of the development of the new scheme, we undertook a consultation process to try to ascertain how we could improve our services through Irish and we invited submissions on that scheme. We advertised both on our own website and on *tuairisc.ie* and we requested submissions from interested parties in terms of our Irish service provision. We received 18 submissions, 14 of which were from members of staff, one from Conradh na Gaeilge and three from private individuals. All of those submissions are being considered in the development our new scheme.

In terms of our services, we have already made a wide range of commitments on what we provide in our application forms, our leaflets, our signage and our oral announcements. We are looking to see what the gaps are and where any gaps have been identified. We also looked at any issues that had arisen during the course of our existing language scheme or any complaints that we might have received about our services through Irish to better inform us on the development of our new scheme.

These are all things that we are considering and trying to learn from to improve what we are doing in the context of the development of our new scheme.

Regarding our new offices that are available in the Gaeltacht areas, we have offices-----

Chairman: Ta a fhios agam cá bhfuil na hoifigí, tá sé léite agam ach cén fáth nach bhfuil oifig sa Ghaeltacht i nGaillimh?

Mr. Eoin Brown: B'shin rud stairiúil, b'fhéidir. Ní raibh aon oifig leasa shóisialaigh riamh sa Ghaeltacht. Tá oifig bheag againn i gCill Rónáin gach Céadaoin. Téann CWO trasna ann as Gaillimh gach seachtain.

Chairman: De réir mar a thuigim, agus táim ag iarraidh ligean don Seanadóir teacht isteach ar ball, ní raibh oifig acu ach bhí community welfare officers ag dul amach agus bhí Gaeilge líofa acu. Chuaigh siadsan amach agus chuir siad seirbhísí ar fáil trí Ghaeilge.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Níl sé sin go baileach fíor-----

Chairman: Gabh mo leithscéal, lig don-----

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Bhíodar ina gcónaí sa phobal-----

Chairman: Tá sé sin ceart go leor, is féidir leis an Teachta mé a cheartú, ach an pointe a bhí á dhéanamh agam ná go raibh daoine ann le Gaeilge nach bhfuil ann níos mó, agus níl an Roinn ag díriú isteach go bhfuil gá leis sin. Sin an rud a chuireann isteach orm cé go bhféadfaí go bhfuilim mícheart, díreach mar a dúirt mo chomhghleacaí.

Mr. Eoin Brown: Freagróidh mé as Béarla, le bhur dtoil. In 2012 or 2013, the Department went through a major transformation, and as part of that, a considerable number of staff were moved from the community welfare service into activation to work as case officers. As part of that, in Galway and throughout the country, we had to look at all of our offices and the services that we were providing in each of those areas. At the same time, there was a considerable change in the service that the community welfare officers were providing in that we changed a number of the schemes. The rent allowance started going to the local authorities and the back to school clothing and footwear scheme was automated. There was less demand for on-the-ground services across the Department.

As part of that we undertook a review of all our community welfare services, not just in the Gaeltacht. We located or relocated them into the major centres where we had Intreo offices, or larger social welfare offices. That included the Gaeltacht offices. At the time we gave a commitment that we would continue to travel out and provide a service to people if they needed it in the area, that we would call to them at home, if we could not deal with them over the phone or by letter etc. That is the situation today.

Unfortunately, at the same time, as I said earlier, a number of our HEOs, who were the people who provided that service, retired and were not replaced by people who had a sufficient level of Irish. Even if we had offices in the locations, we would not have staff proficient in Irish to be able to provide a service there.

Chairman: Go raibh maith agat agus tiocfaidh mé ar ais. Glaoim ar an Seanadóir O'Reilly anois.

Senator Joe O'Reilly: Sílim go bhfuil an oiliúint ghairmiúil iontach tábhachtach agus ba

mhaith liom cúpla ceist a chur faoi sin. An bhfuil go leor múinteoirí ar fáil chun é sin a dhéanamh? An bhfuil sé fógartha go bhfuil gá leathnú sa Roinn agus an ndéanfar iarracht daoine a mhealladh isteach don oiliúint ghairmiúil? An bhfuil seans acu dul go dtí an Ghaeltacht ar feadh tréimhse chun an méid Gaeilge atá ar a dtoil acu a chleachtadh agus a úsáid go nádúrtha? An bhfuil ciorcail chomhrá ar siúl sa Roinn chun go mbeadh daoine ábalta an Ghaeilge a úsáid go nádúrtha eatarthu féin, agus chomh maith leis sin go mbeadh siad ábalta í a fhorbairt agus a fheabhsú go laethúil? Ós rud é go bhfuil sé deacair daoine nua a mhealladh isteach nó a fháil le caighdeán ard Gaeilge, is fiú na daoine sa Roinn a fhorbairt agus oiliúint ghairmiúil a thabhairt dóibh, mar tá bunús Gaeilge ag achan duine sa tír, ón meánscoil agus ón mbunscoil. Sílim go bhfuil sé sin tábhachtach.

Mar fhocal scoir, molaim an dea-obair agus na rudaí maithe atá ar siúl ag an Roinn agus a bhí léirithe níos luaithe. Tá an-spéis agam mar iar-mhúinteoir sa cheist seo faoi oiliúint inseirbhíse sa Roinn. Baintear an-úsáid as sin sa Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna do mhúinteoirí agus a leithéid. An féidir é sin a dhéanamh go forleathan don Ghaeilge i Roinn na bhfinné?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: The Department has a Stór site, which is the title of the Department's Internet site, and on that site there is a dedicated Official Languages Act page. That contains information to assist the Department staff in complying with the Official Languages Act and also in improving services through Irish. There is also a dedicated Irish site, called Gaeilge: an Stór, which contains cultural as well as business material. The business material on that site is guidance notes, a database of bilingual signs, and samples of bilingual stationery for the use of all staff. The site is regularly updated with information on official languages, but also with news and events and publications, and much more so than an official site. The Department continues to enhance and encourage staff to engage with that site as a key communication tool for the Irish language.

The Senator mentioned conversation circles-----

Senator Joe O'Reilly: Agus ranganna inseirbhíse, oiliúint ghairmiúil i ngrúpaí agus ag uaireanta oiriúnacha dóibh, agus an t-am a fháil sa lá chun é sin a dhéanamh.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: There are a range of ways that the Department staff can avail of formal training through Irish. The staff development unit has a range of services that are available to staff, including refund of fees, if they wish to undertake Irish training outside of office time, but they are also encouraged to undertake training during office hours.

There is a new arrangement also for professional Irish language training for civil servants. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform recruited professional Irish language training under the OneLearning platform, and that service has been contracted to Gaelchultúr to provide. There are two courses available: intermediate and advanced. The intermediate course is for staff who are at a basic level in Irish and who need to acquire a greater level of proficiency. The advanced course is for people who have a higher level of Irish and who want to improve that further. That is on the national qualifications framework.

Senator Joe O'Reilly: An ndéanann na finnétithe iarracht daoine a mhealladh ar na cúrsaí sin, is é sin daoine a spreagadh chun na cúrsaí sin a dhéanamh? Sílim go mbeadh éifeacht ag baint leis an méid sin. Mar iar-mhúinteoir, sílim gurb í sin an eochair don rud.

Mr. Eoin Brown: B'fhéidir.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: The Department tries to support people to avail of all kinds of train-

ing and development and is certainly very supportive of Irish language training. We do, from time to time, recruit in-house training also.

I wish to mention also that we have active conversational circles in our offices and these are informal networks where staff come together to engage in practising their Irish language skills, and that encourages them to avail of the more formal training. That is a good way to get staff who are interested in the Irish language and may not have used it for some time to get back into it and start the formal training process.

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: Luaigh an finné go raibh trí nó ceithre oifig sa Ghaeltacht agus go raibh sé ar a gcumas seirbhís a chur ar fáil do mhuintir na Gaelainne ansin. Tá suim agam an bhéim sin a leathnú ón Gaeltacht go dtí pobal na Gaelainne. Tá an daonra is mó Gaelgeoirí anseo i mBaile Átha Cliath. An bhfuil sé ar chumas na Roinne freastal ar mhuintir na Gaelainne lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht in áiteanna cosúil le cathair Chorcaí nó cathair Bhaile Átha Cliath?

Senator Joe O'Reilly: Tá daoine ag dul go dtí an Gaeltacht ar feadh coicíse fiú amháin.

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: An bhfuil an oifig i mBaile Átha Cliath ábalta freastal ar mhuintir na Gaelainne cosúil leis an oifig áitiúil sa Ghaeltacht?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: The Department has identified more than 75 locations where we can provide a service through Irish, but if there is not an Irish-speaking member of staff available in a particular office at a particular point in time, the Department will always make arrangements to take the customer's details and an Irish-speaking member of staff will call that customer back. Many of our Intreo centres throughout the country have members of staff who are willing to provide that face-to-face service through Irish, not just the centres in Gaeltacht areas. Equally, our centralised offices that deal with schemes such as our pension schemes or disability schemes have identified staff members who are available to provide services through Irish. People should be able to access services by phoning or contacting any of those offices by email.

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: An bhféadfaí an liosta den 75 áiteanna sin a chur ar fáil? Tuigim nach bhfuil sé ar fáil anois, ach dá mbeadh na finnéithe in ann é a sheoladh ar aghaidh, bheadh suim agam é a fháil.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: Certainly yes. I am not sure the scheme of those weeks in the Gaeltacht still exists.

Senator Joe O'Reilly: Bhí sé an-tábhachtach.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: It is not something I am aware of currently taking place throughout the Civil Service.

Senator Joe O'Reilly: Is mór an trua é sin ach níl an locht ar an Roinn.

Chairman: An bhfuil botún sa scéim teanga? Tá sé thar a bheith suimiúil ach ansin ar leathanach 14 deirtear gur é leagan Béarla na scéime an leagan oifigiúil. An botún é sin? Tá súil agam gur botún é.

Ms Joan McMahon: The scheme was published bilingually on the Department's website.

Chairman: Ní thuigim conas gurb é an Béarla an leagan oifigiúil. Ba chóir go mbeadh an Ghaeilge mar an leagan oifigiúil.

Ms Joan McMahon: It is provided both in Irish and in English.

Chairman: Tuigim. Tá sé sin ceart go leor ach ba chóir go mbeadh an leagan Gaeilge mar an leagan oifigiúil. Is ait an rud é go bhfuil an Roinn ag rá gurb é an Béarla an leagan oifigiúil. B'fhéidir go mbeadh an Roinn in ann breathnú ar sin.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: That may be something for the Coimisinéir Teanga but we can look into that.

Chairman: Ní dóigh liom go mbeadh an coimisinéir sásta. Ní féidir liom labhairt ar a shon ach tá rud éicint cearr lena bheith ag rá gurb é an leagan Béarla an leagan oifigiúil. Maidir leis na daoine a d'fhreastail ar chúrsaí éagsúla sa Roinn, an bhfuil an figiúr de 91 ceart?

Ms Joan McMahon: It was 71 last year.

Chairman: Gabh mo leithscéal. Níl mé ag iarraidh na hainmneacha a fháil ach na gráid agus ag cén leibhéal ar a raibh na cúrsaí. An bhfuil briseadh síos air sin?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: We will be able to provide that to the committee.

Chairman: An bhfuil na daoine céanna ag déanamh cúrsaí i mbliana? An bhfuil an 71 sin ag leanúint ar aghaidh nó cé mhéid daoine nua atá ann? Táimid ag caint mar gheall ar 71 as beagnach 7,000. Chabhródh an t-eolas sin leis an rud ar fad a cur i gcomhthéacs. Níl Gaeilge ach ag duine amháin de na finnétithe agus tá eiseamláir iontach tábhachtach mar sin. An bhfuil na finnétithe agus na daoine atá i gceannas ar chúrsaí Gaeilge ag freastal ar chúrsaí?

Ms Deirdre Shanley: The number relates to a particular year but there would be a variety of grades and we can provide the-----

Chairman: Ar feadh tréimhse, cúig bliana b'fhéidir.

Ms Deirdre Shanley: Yes, over a period. It would be the case that some people would go to a certain level one year and then, if they progress, they would attend at another level the next year. Sometimes it can be the same people or it can be new people. The Department does not have an unlimited number of places. The Department's civil servants are only a number among many civil servants who attend these courses. They only reflect the numbers within our Department. There are many more attending courses throughout the Civil Service.

Chairman: Tuigim, ach táimid ag caint faoin Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí agus beagnach 7,000 fostaithe. Céard faoi na finnétithe? An bhfuil sé ar intinn acu cúrsa Gaeilge a dhéanamh nó an bhfuil sé déanta acu cheana? Na bac leis an gceist sin ach smaoinigh air. Táimid ag suí anseo chuile choicís agus ag seoladh tuarascálacha. Táimid ag iarraidh an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn agus ar a laghad Gaeilge a bheith ag 20% de chuile dhuine nua atá fostaithe i chuile Roinn mar tá géarchéim ann. Chuir an Seanadóir ceist ar na finnétithe an bhfuil machnamh déanta acu agus an mbeidh siad in ann deileáil leis? Táimid ag moladh go mbeidh Gaeilge ag 20% - ní hamháin de na daoine atá ag teacht isteach ach maidir le hardú céime chomh maith chomh sciobtha agus atá an tAcht nua i bhfeidhm chun dul i ngleic leis an ngéarchéim. Ní féidir dul i ngleic leis an ngéarchéim gan í a aithint i dtús báire. Tá a lán machnaimh le déanamh. B'fhéidir go dtiocfaidh na finnétithe ar ais os ár gcomhair an bhliain seo chugainn. Gabhaim buíochas leis na finnétithe.

Cuireadh an comhchoiste ar fionraí ag 5.48 p.m, lean an comhchoiste le gnó príobháideach ag 5.50 p.m. agus cuireadh an comhchoiste ar athló ag 6.01 p.m. go dtí 4.15 p.m Dé Céadaoin,

19 JUNE 2018

4 Iúil 2018.