



DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DÁIL ÉIREANN

TUAIRISC OIFIGIÚIL—*Neamhcheartaithe*
(OFFICIAL REPORT—*Unrevised*)

Tuesday, 13 November 2007.

Ceisteanna—Questions	
Taoiseach	593
Minister for Education and Science	
Priority Questions	607
Other Questions	621
Adjournment Debate Matters	630
Leaders' Questions	632
Requests to move Adjournment of Dáil under Standing Order 32	639
Order of Business	641
Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2006: Referral to Select Committee	648
Criminal Justice (Mutual Assistance) Bill 2005 [<i>Seanad</i>]: Referral to Select Committee	648
Nuclear Test Ban Bill 2006: Referral to Select Committee	648
Control of Exports Bill 2007 [<i>Seanad</i>]: Referral to Select Committee	649
Passports Bill 2007: Referral to Select Committee	649
Local Government (Roads Functions) Bill 2007:	
Order for Second Stage	649
Second Stage	650
Private Members' Business	
Child Care: Motion	679
Adjournment Debate	
Child Care Services	709
Job Creation	712
Schools Building Projects	715
Electricity Generation	717
Questions: Written Answers	721

DÁIL ÉIREANN

*Dé Máirt, 13 Samhain 2007.
Tuesday, 13 November 2007.*

Chuaigh an Ceann Comhairle i gceannas ar 2.30 p.m.

*Paidir.
Prayer.*

Ceisteanna — Questions.

Social Partnership.

1. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his attendance at the biennial conference of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions on 4 July 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19708/07]

2. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach if he has received a letter from the general secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions seeking significant increases in mortgage interest relief to offset the continuing high level of inflation; his response to the letter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19887/07]

3. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his attendance at the ICTU conference in July 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25354/07]

4. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Taoiseach the role his Department will take in the inclusion of a third sustainability pillar in the social partnership process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22737/07]

5. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach when the next meeting with the social partners under the auspices of Towards 2016 is due to be held; if an agenda has been agreed for the next meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23450/07]

6. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the position regarding the inclusion of a third sustainability pillar in the social partnership system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23841/07]

7. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his ongoing con-

tacts with the parties to the Towards 2016 agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25357/07]

8. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Taoiseach if he will support the application by the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association to be included in social partnership in view of the fact that small businesses are not properly represented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25671/07]

9. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the implementation of the national reform programme under the Lisbon Agenda; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28240/07]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 1 to 9, inclusive, together.

Since the inaugural plenary meeting on 15 February 2007, several meetings have taken place with the social partners in relation to the implementation of Towards 2016. I attended and addressed the ICTU biennial conference on 4 July at which I emphasised the basis for confidence in Ireland's economic outlook while, at the same time, warning against complacency.

Regarding the basis for confidence, I referred in particular to the ESRI's report on the social impact of our economic development. It concluded, among other findings, that living standards have risen for almost everyone, the fall in unemployment, in particular long-term unemployment, has made a decisive impact on social exclusion, people are now more likely to work in a better job than their parents and levels of deprivation have significantly declined for all social groups.

These achievements, and others like them, are not accidental, they are the outcome of good government and sound policy choices taken by a variety of stakeholders in society, mediated in many cases through social partnership.

Regarding the need to guard against complacency, I drew attention in my speech to the globalised setting within which the economy operates. Interest rates, energy prices and competition from emerging economies provide warning signals that success cannot be taken for granted. Minimising inflationary impulses, in so far as we can, is especially important. There is acceptance on all sides of the social partnership framework that we cannot and must not go back to the wage-price inflationary spiral of the early 1980s.

Regarding the ongoing engagement with social partners on the implementation of Towards 2016, the most recent meeting of the steering group was held on 8 October. The agenda included a presentation on the housing commitments under Towards 2016, a presentation on progress for people with disabilities and proposals for the North-South consultative forum.

[The Taoiseach.]

The meeting also considered the progress report on the national reform programme under the Lisbon Agenda which is being progressed within the overall Towards 2016 framework. The report was submitted to the European Commission and laid before the House in October.

The latest plenary meeting took place on 8 November 2007 at Farmleigh House. The Government was represented by me, the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance, the Minister for Health and Children and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Agenda items included a pre-budget presentation from the Department of Finance. The third progress report under Towards 2016 was also circulated at the meeting and has been made available on my Department's website. As is the normal practice, all papers and copies of the progress report have been laid before the Oireachtas.

The steering group will continue to have overall responsibility for managing the implementation of the agreement as it applies to the wider non-pay issues. Quarterly plenary meetings of the social partner pillars will continue, as has been the practice over recent years. The programme for Government commits that "arrangements for representation of environmental issues in Social Partnership will be considered in the course of the review of Towards 2016 which will take place in 2008." Any change to the structure of social partnership must be carefully considered and the Government has previously identified clear and specific criteria against which applications to join the social partnership process are considered. These include that organisations requesting social partner status be national and representative in nature; that they have the capacity to meet the demands and obligations that arise as part of this participation; and that they will add to the capacity of the social partnership process to address issues effectively. In addition, any organisations would be required to formally endorse the Towards 2016 agreement.

In line with this commitment in the programme for Government, the issue will be considered further in the review of Towards 2016 in 2008 and related commitments to enhance the role of Comhar and establish a climate change commission. In respect of the application by the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association to be included in social partnership, the Government fully recognises the central importance of the small business sector to Ireland's economy. It is deeply committed to sustaining its support for enterprise through a competitive regulatory environment, prudent fiscal policy, as well as the comprehensive range of State supports provided by organisations in the field, such as the City and County Enterprise Boards, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and FÁS. The Small Firms Association represents small businesses in social partnership. Participation in the pay negotiations will continue to be confined to organisations with an

established role in pay and industrial relations matters and will not be extended beyond the current participation.

Regarding correspondence received from the General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions on the question of inflation and mortgage interest relief, I wrote to ICTU on 14 September 2007 reaffirming the Government's resolve to tackle the root causes of inflation, in so far as it is within our capacity to do so. The General Secretary raised the question of increasing the ceiling on mortgage interest relief for first-time buyers and those who bought a house in the past seven years. In response I confirmed that the commitments in the programme for Government in this respect are set within the context of the budget. The Tánaiste and Minister for Finance announced on 3 July 2007 his intention that budget 2008 will provide for a further increase in mortgage interest relief for first-time buyers of €10,000 for a single person and €20,000 for couples or widowed persons.

Deputy Enda Kenny: The Taoiseach has given a long reply. It is generally recognised that the social partnership has been beneficial for the country because it has dampened the need for strike action in many cases. The structure originally envisaged, however, is not able to cope with what we face now.

Chaos is being caused by the Dublin Bus strike in what is a growing city with an increasing population, where commuters are hard-pressed to get to work in our high pressure society. They need new cross-city and orbital bus routes and services. When the system fails to find agreement with its workforce causing chaos on the streets it significantly disrupts people's lives. Does the Taoiseach accept that the Dublin Bus dispute, leaving aside its minutiae, is the failure of a regulatory regime to provide for people's need for services given the physical and human expansion of this city? Leaving aside the minutiae of the dispute does the Taoiseach agree that we are faced with a symptom of a failed regulatory regime? Will the Taoiseach comment on that?

People who require transport services generally do not mind who provides them as long as they are cost efficient, safe, effective and get them to and from work without disruption. Does the Taoiseach agree that the liberalisation of transport in Dublin and across the country has failed in this regard? Deputy Mary O'Rourke, who was Minister in 2000, introduced proposals for the liberalisation of these routes that were abandoned just before the election. There is clearly a demand from many people for new services and this disruption has occurred because the virtual monopoly that is *in situ* has failed to find agreement in its workforce.

Is this matter the symptom of a failed regulatory regime? What does the Taoiseach propose regarding the continued liberalisation of the bus transport market? It takes three years for a

private sector applicant to get a licence, given the chaos in the Department of Transport.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Kenny will be aware that the Taoiseach does not have responsibility for issues affecting line Ministers. The Taoiseach may answer in so far as the Deputy's questions relate to social partnership.

Deputy Enda Kenny: That is what my questions relate to.

The Taoiseach: On the regulatory situation, the Department of Transport has received union agreement in recent years on the issuing of additional licences, especially for new routes. We have not started issuing licences and creating competition on existing routes but there are many new services. The total liberalisation of the market, which would open it to competition, is under ongoing consideration but many problems exist in terms of getting agreement from those in the transport sector.

There is a progressive movement of new services and Dublin Bus and CIE have agreed to move to new areas of the city and implement cross city routes, which have gone well. In fairness to Dublin Bus, incidents of industrial action at the company have been rare in recent years and I cannot recall when the last serious, all-out dispute occurred. There have been sporadic disputes at various stations, such as the one taking place at the moment.

I see this dispute as neither regulatory in nature nor pertaining to social partnership. Conflicts of this type should not happen but occur from time to time. I deplore the hardship that has been inflicted on the travelling public as a result of this dispute at Dublin Bus. I recognise that genuine issues are involved in this matter but that is not the point. The issues have been through the conciliation process at the Labour Relations Commission and are subject to a Labour Court recommendation. The issues have been through all the relevant strands of the process and a clear decision has been made. We know that recommendations of this type from the Labour Court are not binding. Substituting old-fashioned conflict for sensible negotiation and agreement benefits neither the company nor its employees. On the contrary, in a world where customers expect other options, as Deputy Kenny said, disputes like this are self-defeating and all sides should recognise that.

I am sure that creative solutions can be found to this dispute, like any other dispute. In reply to Deputy Kenny's question, I urge the parties involved to use the highly effective industrial relations machinery that is available to resolve the matter. The issue has been through the conciliation process at the Labour Relations Commission and is the subject of a Labour Court recommendation. The parties involved should use these creative solutions to bring about a quick

resolution and I hope that can be achieved as quickly as possible.

The broader question is how the management of Dublin Bus can harness demand to its own advantage, leaving aside the private sector companies that wish to enter the market. Dublin Bus should take a proactive approach in this. We saw what happened across the water where Margaret Thatcher's Government believed the way right of forcing the hand of the state municipal bus services was to privatise the routes. That has been in dramatic reverse for the past five years, however, because the private sector was only interested in the lucrative routes at lucrative times. It was not interested in providing a service for 17 or 18 hours a day. This is something to which I have never been attracted, but we would force that upon ourselves if we did not have a sensible, progressive approach in terms of public bus services.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Will the Taoiseach discuss with the Minister for Transport the fact that the system that operates in that Department is simply crazy in terms of freeing up and giving an efficient response to applications for licences for new services, whether on existing routes or new ones? It takes an operator at least three years to get a licence and that is unacceptable. In the sprawling conurbations of this city, we should expect better. We have come a long way since the days when everybody had to go to Busáras to get a bus. Aircoach and others showed what can be done. However, the system that operates within the Department of Transport for issuing of licences is antiquated, inefficient and lacks the professionalism we expect in a modern country.

At the IBEC biennial presidential dinner on 26 October, the Taoiseach rightly said that arresting the trend of deterioration in our cost competitiveness in recent years would be key to future growth. He went on to say that a key consideration when we come to the next phase of pay negotiations under Towards 2016 would be its application to the public sector as much as the private sector. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, who is seated beside the Taoiseach, is only in the job a wet week and has already received an increase of €25,000. Good luck to the Minister.

Does the Taoiseach not agree that these awards are disproportionate to the extent that they are not comparable to any private sector area? The only people to whom Ministers can be compared are other Ministers, whether in Britain or another European country. It seems the body reviewing their pay looked to New Zealand and Australia for some reason. On my way to Brussels on Tuesday of last week, I noticed in *The Economist* a beautiful table showing our small country with its well paid Ministers. Here is our man, ahead of President George Bush, President Nicolas Sarkozy, Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Deputy Finian McGrath: Deputy Kenny is not doing too badly himself.

Deputy Enda Kenny: The pay increases were disproportionate and based on a false premise. I ask the Taoiseach to comment on this. It will be the first time he has had an opportunity to do so in the House.

Some people are under pressure as a result of the news coming from the United States of further issues arising from the crisis surrounding sub-prime lending. The Taoiseach is telling everybody to tighten their belts at a time when members of the Cabinet have awarded themselves — accepted, it was an independent recommendation — pay increases ranging from €25,000 to €38,000. Does he think this was realistic in the current circumstances, given that when I was a member of Cabinet, our first decision was to refuse an increase on that basis?

The Taoiseach referred to FÁS in the context of social partnership. He knows well that FÁS is spending some €1 billion a year. One of the critical issues facing all of us is the necessity to upskill and retrain workers. This is a sizeable challenge. Does the Taoiseach consider that FÁS, under its current structure, has the capacity to meet this challenge given that there is an increasing concern about major manufacturing firms having to move abroad to lower cost regions? Is FÁS up to getting best value for €1 billion of taxpayers' money under its current structure?

The Taoiseach: There are three questions. With regard to the first, I will raise the issue of CIE with the Minister for Transport. I know discussions have been ongoing and the unions, management and the Department have made progress in liberalising the regime with regard to the relevant Act and having a more open way of giving licences for new routes and areas. They have not fully liberalised the market because it would create direct competition. I will never say they cannot make more progress as that could be done. The former Minister for Transport, Deputy Cullen, moved the negotiations a long way in trying to progress the issue. I will raise with the Minister the matter of the delays as there is no reason for a three-year delay.

I made a number of points outside the House on the issue of pay. The reality is that when anybody sees a very large increase that covers a long period, it creates difficulties, and I accept that point. The review body covered a period from 2000 but it should have been covered the period from 2000 to 2004. That was not done up to 2004 but from 2000 to the current period. It benchmarked this rise against what it believed were comparable grades in the private sector, which is what the review body does.

The impression constantly given is that the Government dreamed up these increases and implemented them itself. No matter how many times it is mentioned, that is the argument that is

made. The review body has been there since 1969 and it periodically, originally on a four-year basis, carries out an assessment. It is an independent assessment, carried out by independent people, and is based on the principles of comparability that are an established feature of public pay determination. That is accepted by the social partners and most other people.

The assessment reflects trends in the private sector at senior levels. For example, it does not just take into account politicians in New Zealand or Australia but the trends across private sector grades. The reality is the private sector grades have moved up substantially over the past seven years. I listened to the views of ICTU and others on this issue when the Government was considering this proposal. It decided that we should not take the increase immediately but rather over a two-year period, which is what has happened a number of times. They have been phased in.

Deputy Kenny stated he was a member of a Government that pressed back these recommendations. I too have been a member of Governments that have done that but they have always taken the increase anyway. They either take a sliding scale or refer them but they have always been taken. There are a number of examples where there have been sliding scales but none of the proposals since 1969 has been rejected.

With regard to the comparisons with French President Sarkozy and others, the Deputy and I know all the arrangements these people have. The position is similar with much of their tax arrangements as they do not operate a system of transparency. They have all kinds of allowances and many ways of implementing them. I would like somebody to put all their arrangements up front. Not only do most of these people have permanent and weekend residences but they also have holiday residences. They have different rules where they are the beneficiaries of prolonged holidays, yachts and homes. We do not and should not have those regulations.

Most of the people mentioned by the Deputy would not pay for a cup of tea from one end of the year to the other because they have catering staff in their homes and can use jets for social as well as other occasions. They are not comparable conditions so we should not use them.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: We could make an amendment.

The Taoiseach: It would be interesting to write an article comparing them.

Deputy Finian McGrath: Would the Deputy vote for it?

The Taoiseach: It would not be hard for a member of the media to write a glowing article about how poverty-stricken we are compared to

other countries. I suppose I will have to wait for that.

The review body discounted the comparable salaries in the private sector by 15% to reflect the value of public service increases. I would gladly forego the increase to a future date, as happened before, if I believed it would make a whit of difference but it would probably be reported on page 99 of the newspaper.

The reality is that an independent body examined this and came up with an assessment that we decided to phase in over a period. The 2000 agreement is seven years old, so the increase is less than 3% per annum, with the 7.5% paid to us in the interim period in 2005. We have extended it by two years and it was agreed in the report that the next review would be in four years time. There is an 11 year period, therefore, with one increase. Admittedly it is a large increase, I am not arguing that, but it is an 11 year increase of just under 3% over the seven years. That is the position.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Deputy Finian McGrath is interested in it too. He wants to spend it on a yacht in Dún Laoghaire.

Deputy Finian McGrath: Clontarf actually.

The Taoiseach: On FÁS, I totally agree that the updating of skills will be a major part of the future of industry. That has been highlighted in many reports. In the national development plan a huge amount has been set aside for the upskilling of the existing workforce. We have a large workforce and this year has been a good year for manufacturing industry. Some other sectors may have been under pressure but it was a good year for manufacturing. Its future success depends on its ability to upskill quickly with good equipment.

I do not deal with FÁS on a daily basis, as I did in the past, but the organisation also has an input from sectors tied to third level education and should be able to do this. The skills evaluation report earlier this year highlighted some of what we must do in terms of training. FÁS is a large organisation with many employees and it should be up to doing it. The necessary efforts should be put in by FÁS because it has the budget, the network of offices and training centres and associations with industry and third level institutions.

Can the system be improved? The skills evaluation report showed that we must continually retrain, upskilling our people, if we are to stay at the cutting edge of new technology. FÁS is not the only organisation doing that, in-company training in the private sector is hugely important for those companies spending large amounts in the manufacturing, pharmaceutical and other sectors. That requires resources in the public sector. FÁS is a suitable public sector organisation for this but it should take full account of the skills evaluation report.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: Yesterday morning and again this morning, 60,000 Dublin commuters could not get a bus to work. If this dispute in Dublin Bus escalates, more people will be unable to get a bus to work. On top of that there are now reports that there may be strikes in Aer Lingus. The Taoiseach is responding to questions on social partnership, which is supposed to resolve those disputes and ensure we do not have industrial action over matters such as rosters, tea breaks and changes in work practices.

As a result of these disputes, are we witnessing the unravelling of the social partnership process? Has the Taoiseach contributed to such unravelling? I note the Taoiseach

3 o'clock

and the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance asked for wage restraint at Farmleigh last week. Does the Taoiseach not have a hard neck to ask the social partners for wage restraint in circumstances in which he is not prepared to exercise it himself? What does he have to say in respect of the comment made by Mr. David Begg, who is not known for overstatement, to the effect that the Taoiseach's plea for wage restraint lacked credibility on foot of the ministerial pay increases? Is it not the case that the industrial disputes that are beginning to emerge and which resemble an echo from the past are, to some extent, an indicator of a worsening industrial relations climate to which the Taoiseach has contributed personally?

The Taoiseach: As Deputy Gilmore is aware, that is not the case. Social partnership has been tremendously successful in avoiding unnecessary disputes but has not eliminated them. As I noted earlier, while I deplore the hardship that has been inflicted on the travelling public as a result of the dispute, I recognise that legitimate issues are involved. It is not for me to call an industrial dispute. This particular dispute has existed for many months and has nothing to do with any topical issue that has arisen in the past few weeks. It has been at conciliation at the Labour Relations Commission for many months. It went through that process and was subsequently the subject of a full Labour Court recommendation, which sided with the company and its management. Thereafter, there were ongoing discussions.

However, stating what the Labour Court does will not resolve any dispute. As I noted earlier, its recommendations are not binding. The Deputy was correct in one respect, namely, this constitutes the substitution of old-fashioned conflict for what should be sensible negotiations and agreement. The company does not benefit from this and I believe that creative solutions should be found as in any other dispute. I urge the parties to use the highly effective industrial relations machinery available to resolve this issue. Many people working within this machinery are familiar with Dublin Bus and have the capacity to deal with this issue, which has persisted for some time.

[The Taoiseach.]

In fairness to the company in this case, it went through the process. I am usually critical of those who do not go through the machinery of the State, which we support through social partnership. With the exception of the Labour Relations Commission, this machinery preceded social partnership. The Labour Court existed before social partnership and people should abide by it. However, the dispute is now under way and people have ignored both the Labour Relations Commission and the Labour Court. At least they should try to find creative solutions and to stop the hardship inflicted on the travelling public.

In respect of Aer Lingus, all Members are aware that many difficult change issues arise because of the nature of change within that sector. I recognise that discussion on this particular issue has been ongoing without resolution for the better part of six months. It is clear the threatened action will have an impact on customer behaviour. Bookings will be lost and confidence in the airline might well be affected, which is in the interests of neither the company nor its employees. The national implementation body, which acts under the remit of social partnership and Towards 2016, has met the company and the trade unions recently. It is considering whether it can make a useful recommendation to the parties regarding the difficult issues that have arisen. It is best to deal with and resolve them by agreement, rather than by risking lasting damage in an industrial dispute.

I do not accept Deputy Gilmore's suggestion that these difficulties reflect a wider problem in industrial relations. More than 2 million people work every day and nowadays there are only a handful of disputes. On the contrary, the very salience of the issues at Dublin Bus and Aer Lingus reflects instead the extent to which industrial peace and harmony, as well as the smooth management of change, has been the norm in the partnership process and there is no reason this pattern should not continue into the future. I do not believe there is any connection between any of these issues and what David Begg said. In fact, I was at the meeting and I read the speeches of both David Begg and Jack O'Connor. What both of them said, as I understand it, is that they accepted that the increases recommended by the review body were the result of an independent assessment based on the principles of comparability which are an established feature of public sector pay determination. The pay increases reflect trends in the private sector at senior levels. These private sector trends were the primary focus of the comments made by David Begg and Jack O'Connor. They made comments about the private sector right across the board. They were commenting not on the increases that were paid under the review body but on the increases across the private sector, and they clearly have a point.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Taoiseach has referred a couple of times to comparisons with the private sector to justify the pay increase which he has given himself. These private sector comparisons are understandable when one is considering, for example, the salaries of chief executives of State companies, which may be comparable to private sector wages. Similarly, salaries among the Judiciary may be compared with earnings in the legal profession. Can the Taoiseach tell the House what private sector comparison he is relying on to justify his own pay increase? I am not aware that there are comparisons that can be made with the private sector in respect of political offices.

Since I asked specifically about the Dublin Bus dispute, can the Taoiseach tell us whether there are plans to ask the Labour Court, the Labour Relations Commission or any of the industrial relations bodies established under the social partnership arrangement to intervene in that dispute and bring about a settlement?

The Taoiseach: I do not think there are currently any plans to ask for intervention. However, I take the opportunity to say that I understand both the position of the company and of the union. The company put its case through the conciliation process and the Labour Court and received an adjudication. That said, I have listened to some senior bus workers who said they had particular understandings of how these routes would work and that the arrangements are not in line with these understandings. It is true that the Labour Court considered these understandings and rejected them, but that does not solve the dispute or improve the situation for the travelling public. While these matters are not binding, and the company can argue its position, both sides should look for creative solutions, as in any dispute. I urge both parties to use the highly effective industrial relations machinery that exists to try to find the basis of an agreement. I am not saying this will be easy, because the dispute has been going on for quite a long time, but I ask them to consider this.

On the matter of pay increases, I am not looking for any comparators as that is not the Government's job. It is seven years since a report such as this was issued by the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector. Of the 2,000 people covered in this report, politicians and office holders account for 20 or 30. In money terms, it is a very small percentage of the total. The review body has conducted a pay review after a seven-year gap — the previous review was in the summer of 2000 — and I note the report states that we should return to a four-year period between reviews.

The Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector was established way back in 1969, a year when there was much industrial unrest in one form or another. It is an independent entity. It has the primary function of advis-

ing the Government on these matters. The body's most recent report covered the Civil Service, local authorities, health boards, non-commercial State bodies, An Garda Síochána, the Defence Forces, hospital consultants, the Judiciary and the political officeholders. As the Deputy will be aware, they group did not base politicians on anyone — either those in the commercial semi-State bodies or, for that matter, industry. If one looks across private sector industry, people who would be considered to be in high management jobs, most of those at the top end — this is the point of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions — earn in excess of €1 million. Thankfully, the group members did not recommend such increases.

They looked at what they believed was a comparator, taking into account the 15% for pension provision. They looked at those rates, which are far less than what would be occurring in the private sector. If one looks at the range in the 30 or so companies in the private sector that are normally listed, there is no comparison between the review body's recommendations and those areas. I am not arguing for a second that there should be. The review covers a seven year period, five years extended by two. Some people said that this should cover the four year period until the next review. That would not have made much difference, one way or the other. It came to under 3% a year across the system. While the total amount is high, and my own increase of €38,000 is considered high, it was done on a basis that was independent and has been followed for 38 years.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Does the Taoiseach recall that two of the key issues addressed at the ICTU conference in July were the vital concerns of all Irish workers of trade union recognition and the ongoing disgraceful abuse of agency workers by employers?

When will the Government bring in legislation to make it mandatory on employers to recognise trade union activities within their respective work places? How does the Taoiseach respond to the situation whereby workers who are seeking to organise trade union activity in their respective work places face dismissal? How does he respond to the situation that employers in this State are making it a condition of employment that employees, or prospective employees, do not involve themselves in trade union activity? How can we square those situations with the fact that Government recognises the trade union sector as a critical and important part of the social partnership process? What does the Taoiseach intend to do about this? When does he intend to bring in legislation to ensure that all employers properly recognise and accord due recognition to trade unions and their respective representatives within all areas of employment?

On the second issue, the issue of agency workers, is the Taoiseach aware that this State, Britain and Hungary are the only three states within the European Union that have not legis-

lated to ensure that agency workers are treated in exactly the same way as directly employed labour? Is he aware that we have a situation here where directly employed workers and agency engaged employees are working side by side doing exactly the same work but receiving two very different levels of pay for their work and, indeed, in regard to the latter category, those employed through the agencies are actually in poorer working conditions in real terms? What does the Taoiseach propose to do about this inequality that is perpetuated, sadly, by Irish employers and others who have established here over the years? Does the Taoiseach agree that it is patently in the interest of all workers, those who are directly employed and those who are agency engaged, that all workers are treated equally in terms of pay for work done and conditions of employment, and that the latter category applies to both Irish workers and non-national workers within the agency sector? Does he agree that it is hugely important in the interest of all and a fair return for labour that each are treated exactly the same?

The Taoiseach: Time will not allow me answer all of those questions. Generally, I support implementation of the employment rights and compliance agenda agreed under Towards 2016. The Deputy is aware that several issues arise in that regard. There was a Supreme Court decision earlier in the year which created difficulties for the trade unions. That matter is under discussion by trade unions, employers and us. Agency workers have become a big issue because of the way so many of the immigrants and those who are coming in under the European regulations are being employed. Detailed discussions are ongoing in regard to those issues.

Deputy Ó Caoláin asked for an update regarding employment rights and the compliance agenda. We spent a long time working on Towards 2016. We spent five or six months working on a comprehensive package of measures dealing with employment rights and compliance. The Deputy touched on several of the points. They included the establishment of a new statutory body for employment rights compliance, a trebling of the number of labour inspectors, significant increases in penalties for non-compliance with employment law — that is for Irish workers or immigrant workers — measures to further protect agency workers, which is part of that package, and new legislation in regard to exceptional collective redundancy and dismissals in the context of industrial disputes.

That agreement also provided for the establishment of more user-friendly adjudication and redress mechanisms in the employment rights area. All of those are covered in the agreement. If I were to go through each of them, it would take a considerable amount of time. The Employment Law Compliance Bill will be published before the end of this year. It will provide among

[The Taoiseach.]

other things for the establishment on a statutory basis of the new employment rights authority, NERA. A director has been appointed and the management team is in place. More than 20 labour inspectors have been appointed. Ten inspectors with specific language skills are being recruited. The number of inspectors will be increased from the current level of 37 to 90 by the end of this year.

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment has also announced proposals in regard to the regionalisation of the labour inspectorate. We also enacted the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2007 which covers a number of these points. Regarding the Revenue Commissioners, we have updated the powers of investigation of self-employment issues which is a large part of what the Deputy inquired about.

On the welfare side, we introduced very strict regulations and obligations in regard to PRSI. The sixth part was the Protection of Employment (Exceptional Collective Redundancies and Related Matters) Act which was signed in the summer of 2007. Progress on all these issues is ongoing. The agency issue is still under discussion as the union side feels significant abuses still operate in this area. I have discussed this with individual unions and with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. We are committed to trying to make further progress in that area.

Priority Questions.

Early School Leavers.

44. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science if she will make a statement on the school drop-out rate for primary and post-primary education. [28561/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The emphasis placed by Government on tackling educational disadvantage in recent years is unprecedented. Since 2003, we have increased investment in educational inclusion measures at all levels by no less than 60%, spending €730 million in 2007.

We are determined to ensure that young people from disadvantaged areas get the support they need to encourage them to finish school. To this end, we have provided additional investment in a wide range of areas, including extra teachers, grants for books, homework clubs, school meals and summer camps. We have also expanded access to important services such as the home school community liaison scheme and the school completion programme, which work with students at risk of early school leaving and their families.

There are now approximately 620 staff working in services such as these, including more than 130

extra posts allocated under the DEIS action plan over the past two years. In addition, the National Educational Welfare Board now has more than 100 staff and is specifically tasked with tackling attendance problems that if left unchecked can culminate in young people dropping out of school.

There is an emphasis under DEIS on helping children to make a smooth transition to second level. Initiatives such as familiarisation days and week-long transfer programmes have been shown to have been very successful in that regard. Schools participating in the school support programme under DEIS are being encouraged to prioritise the development of effective transfer programmes for pupils making the transition to post-primary education.

In terms of achievement at post-primary level, it is important to examine the issue in terms of attainment of second level education or equivalent rather than just school completion. Focusing just on school completion devalues the hard work of students who continued their education in Youthreach centres, went on to train for apprenticeships through FÁS or acquired qualifications through other equally valuable routes.

The Government is encouraged by data that shows that the attainment levels of our young people have improved significantly in recent years. By 2006, 85.4% of Irish people aged 20 to 24 years old had obtained upper second level education or equivalent — up from 82.6% in 2000 and significantly ahead of the EU average of 77.8%.

The improvement in the proportion aged 20 to 24 years old with at least second level education or equivalent in recent years is testament to the success of the dual strategy of both improving school completion levels and increasing access to second chance and further education.

Additional information not given on the floor of the House.

Further improvements in the availability of second chance education are a priority for us. As the Deputy may be aware, funding has been provided for 400 extra Youthreach places this year. Six hundred more places are due to be provided by 2009 under the Towards 2016 social partnership agreement.

We are also conscious that the content and perceived relevance of the school curricula have an important effect on students' motivation and desire to finish school. Under the DEIS plan, more students in disadvantaged areas will have access to the junior certificate schools programme and the leaving certificate applied programme.

There is evidence that the Government's focus on improving school completion rates and attainment levels in recent years is making a difference. I assure the Deputy that further improvements in this area will continue to be a priority for us in the years ahead.

Social inclusion measures across other Departments have also been prioritised under the Towards 2016 agreement, the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion and the national development plan.

Deputy Brian Hayes: The Minister did not answer the question. My question related to the school drop-out rate. Is she aware that in the census report of 1996, approximately 3% of students had dropped out of post-primary education by the age of 15 years? The latest data from the 2006 census shows that the figure is 6.6%. Last year, 3,700 students had left post-primary education by the age of 15 years. That is a doubling of the school drop-out rate over the past ten years. Will the Minister accept that her Government and her administration over the past ten years have failed miserably to tackle this problem?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: The Deputy is referring to the census figures but these figures do not agree with the Department's estimate of participation rates for 15 year olds.

Deputy Ulick Burke: Surprise, surprise.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: It is widely accepted that the participation rate of 15 year old students is within 0.5% of the total numbers. Clarification on this question was sought from the Central Statistics Office and the Taoiseach answered a question on it last week when he stated: "It should be borne in mind that the figures for persons aged 15 years may be affected by the fact that this age was used in a filter question on the census questionnaire, resulting in a possible overstatement of the number of 15 year olds who have ceased education". The CSO provided this information to the Taoiseach stating it was not a straightforward question to 15 year old people about their standard of education and whether they were still in school. The question was to the effect that if they were under age 15 they should skip to number 34 on the next page, and the CSO has said that a higher number than expected skipped the entire question on education. It is widely accepted that we could not depend on that figure because of the nature of the way in which that question was put. It was a filtering question rather than a direct question put to 15 year old people. All of the evidence the Department has, and on international surveys, shows that our participation rates and school completion rates for 15 year old students are much higher than most of the European average, as I have already identified.

Deputy Brian Hayes: We are now in the unusual situation where the Minister is attempting to rubbish the independent impartial figures that have been produced by the CSO. That is astonishing because her Department has used the CSO figures for the past ten years to

back up its case. Will the Minister respond to the recent comments by the chief executive officer of the National Education Welfare Board? He stated:

We are available in the most disadvantaged areas but outside that we are just working with crisis cases. We would prefer to be doing a lot more preventative work and early intervention work.

My understanding is that the National Educational Welfare Board has sought 50 additional officers to help children falling through the education system and that the Department is prepared to give 15 of the 50 requirements. Is this not a case where the Minister sets up a body, refuses to fund the body and then blames the body and everyone else for her own failures in this area?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: The information I gave in respect of the census was that given by the Taoiseach in reply to the same question last week on the 15 year olds and it is a valid answer. The National Educational Welfare Board is one part of the picture. It has 109 people employed currently doing very valuable work throughout the country.

Deputy Brian Hayes: It has 85 officers in the field.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: No. There are 109 people employed in the National Educational Welfare Board.

Deputy Brian Hayes: There are 85 officers in the field.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Minister, without interruption.

Deputy Brian Hayes: Misinformation.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: There are 620 people working directly with young people at risk of dropping out of school and the work they do is just as valuable. They are the home school community liaison people who are a link between the parents and the schools to ensure the children stay on in school. They are the school completion fund programme co-ordinators who organise activities such as transition into primary and secondary schools, summer camps, study camps and the DEIS programme, which is targeting——

Deputy Brian Hayes: Is Mr. Ward wrong?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: The changes in curriculum have also ensured that young people stay on in school.

Deputy Brian Hayes: Mr. Ward is wrong, is he?

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Minister, without interruption.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: It is a much broader report. The National Educational Welfare Board is the stick element of it. The rest of them are the carrot element, and both are necessary.

School Accommodation.

45. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to her reply to parliamentary Question No. 158 of 1 November 2007, the reason her Department has sanctioned money to primary schools to rent prefabs as temporary accommodation for a period of three years or less but has no details of the terms of the contract and the rental cost between the school authority and the rental company as she has already indicated the sum involved is €24.5 million; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28490/07]

Deputy Mary Hanafin: Increased enrolments and the appointment of nearly 5,000 extra primary teachers since 2002 alone have created a considerable demand for extra school accommodation in recent years. This is being met by unprecedented investment in the school building programme, with more than €540 million being spent this year.

My Department has sought to provide schools with permanent solutions to their accommodation needs where possible. Construction in 2007 alone will deliver more than 700 classrooms to provide permanent accommodation for more than 17,500 pupils, mainly in developing areas.

One of the methods that has helped us to keep expenditure on prefabs at a minimum has been the introduction of the permanent accommodation scheme. Since 2003, schools have been offered capital funding to build extra classrooms rather than taking prefabs. Between 2003 and 2006, 200 schools were approved under this scheme, at a total cost of €54.1 million, but last year, €27.5 million was provided for this scheme. We have dramatically increased the allocation in 2007 to €47.4 million to allow more than 305 classrooms and 182 resource rooms to be sanctioned this year alone.

This and other initiatives have enabled us to keep expenditure on the rental of temporary accommodation low. The Deputy's question refers to the fact that €24.5 million was spent on rental last year. I should also point out that while much of this rented accommodation is in prefabricated units it can also include the rental of buildings. It is important to put this figure in context. In fact, it amounts to less than 5% of the almost €525 million invested in school buildings last year.

Where accommodation is needed at very short notice, however, temporary accommodation can be the only option. Such accommodation may

also be used where the need is short-term, such as when a school requires a temporary building or is awaiting the completion of construction of permanent facilities.

With a view to shortening construction times and achieving better value for money, my Department has developed standard designs for primary schools, known as generic repeat designs. Using such a design, the construction of Griffeen Valley Educate Together school took only five months.

We are also moving towards greater use of system build accommodation, whereby a significant amount of the construction work for school buildings can be completed off-site while planning permission is awaited. Using this type of approach, my Department was able to provide a new 16 classroom school in Laytown this year.

As part of the strategy for the provision of school places for 2008 and onwards, my Department has initiated a tender process for a draw-down contract facility that will be used to provide additional school places in the rapidly developing areas. This is aimed at providing school accommodation in very short timescales using modern methodologies such as off-site construction. We are using a range of methods, therefore, to limit the need for temporary accommodation.

Additional information not given on the floor of the House.

Regarding the information on individual rental agreements sought by the Deputy, the situation is that in general, the board of management of a school is responsible for acquiring temporary accommodation, including the procurement of prefabs. In practice, a rental contract is between a school's board of management and a supplying contractor.

It is important to emphasise that the Department examines all applications for additional accommodation on an individual basis to determine if the need exists in the first instance. My officials also decide if the level of funding being sought by a school for prefab rental is acceptable. My Department is satisfied that adequate financial management measures are in place and that comprehensive information is available on individual records held on individual school files. However, my Department does not have details of all of these contractual arrangements entered into by schools available in a format that provides readily accessible cumulative information on the overall position. It is intended to address this issue as part of a general review of rental policy currently being undertaken by my Department.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I thank the Minister for her reply, but had I replied similarly to a question she set for me in one of the classes she occupied expertly in Sion Hill, I would have failed. She did not answer a question I asked clearly. She gave the House a wonderful story about construction and all sorts of other things, but it did not address the question. Nor did she answer Deputy Brian

Hayes's question. My question related to the Minister's previous misleading reply which read:

To ask the Minister for Education and Science further to her reply to Parliamentary Question No. 158 of 1 November 2007, the reason her Department has sanctioned money to primary schools to rent prefabs as temporary accommodation for a period of three years or less but has no details of the terms of the contract and the rental cost between the school authority and the rental company as she has already indicated the sum involved is €24.5 million; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

That is what I wanted to find out. The rest of the information, for which I thank the Minister, was wonderful but irrelevant to my question. She is deliberately evading parliamentary questions a second time by answering every question that was not asked and refusing to answer the questions asked.

We are discussing Allspace Limited prefabs, which have a guaranteed life expectancy of 30 years and a possible expectancy of up to 50 years. My question asked whether the Minister examines the terms of the contracts, it did not relate to the other wonderful, irrelevant information. I was happy to receive them, but they were not the answer.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: A Minister cannot be criticised for putting on the record what is occurring in respect of a substantial building programme. My reply, which has been circulated to the Deputy, stated——

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: On a point of order, the House has a function to hold the Minister to account, not to be an applause machine for public relations exercises.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: That is not a point of order.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: I ran out of time before I reached page four of my reply, but it will be circulated to the Deputy.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Deputies do not even have page one.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: It stated:

The board of management of a school is responsible for acquiring temporary accommodation, including the procurement of prefabs. In practice, a rental contract is between the school's board of management and the supplying contractor.

The Department examines all applications for additional accommodation to determine whether it is necessary and we determine the level of funding sought by a school for a prefab. If satisfied that all adequate financial measures are in place,

the information is placed on the schools' files, but we do not have the details of the individual contractual arrangements entered into by schools in a way that is readily accessible without going through each school's files. Due to the amount being spent on the capital programme and temporary accommodation, we are considering this matter.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Deputy Quinn can ask a brief, final supplementary question.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I asked a specific question about details the Department has, but the Minister refuses to give them to me. She could have given me a sample of ten. We are trying to consider value for money.

Some €24.5 million is probably not of particular consequence to the Government, but it is an enormous amount to all the schools that the Minister recently told not to proceed with setting out to tender. Whoever is writing the Minister's replies——

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Deputy should ask a question.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: ——is not letting her answer with information she has.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: Some €24.5 million is a substantial amount, but it is small in the context of the €540 million being spent on the capital programme. The Deputy asked what details the Department has regarding the terms of the contract and the rental cost. As I made clear, that information is kept by the individual schools and we do not have it, for example, on a computer database that would make it readily available.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: Why not? How does the Department know it is getting value for money?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: We check the cost of each case.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Minister should ignore the heckling.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: The schools to which the Deputy referred, the prefab accommodations of which are being put on hold, have been given the go-ahead subject to the tendering process not running out of control.

Site Acquisitions.

46. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science the sites which have been acquired or designated for new schools under the Fingal school model agreement announced in September 2007. [28562/07]

Deputy Mary Hanafin: Land has been acquired as a result of my Department and Fingal County

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Council working in partnership over the past number of years. The focus is on finalising arrangements for sites needed for the next school year.

The innovations in the design and delivery of school buildings put in place in recent years mean that once the land has been acquired, we can provide school accommodation quickly. While Fingal County Council is working on the acquisition of sites, my Department has tendered for a contractor capable of delivering new schools within an on-site construction time of four months. My Department has been in regular contact with local authority staff regarding the status of the sites we have asked them to acquire.

Last September, I met the council manager and others to discuss progress. While the meeting gave rise to considerable media attention, it was not the start of the co-operation between the Department and the council, which has been ongoing for some time. Two years ago, the Department and the council agreed to develop a new model of partnership for providing school and community facilities. Under the terms of the Fingal school agreement, the local authority has undertaken to identify and acquire appropriate sites for schools as recommended by the Department. The design of the schools will be varied to meet community needs, including enhanced facilities, etc.

As site acquisitions can be commercially sensitive, my Department does not generally provide specific details in advance of contracts being signed. Once the contracts have been signed, the information can be released in the normal way.

While the scale of the work under way in Fingal is extensive because of rapid population growth in that area, my Department has developed much closer working relations generally with local authorities in recent years, particularly in rapidly developing areas. In addition to meeting the Fingal County Council manager, I met the county managers of Meath and Kildare and am arranging to meet the managers of South Dublin County Council and Westmeath County Council to follow up on what is required in terms of planning. I met the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to discuss how the programme for Government commitments in respect of school planning and land acquisition can be progressed.

Deputy Brian Hayes: This is curious. I asked the Minister to tell the House which 13 sites the Department or the council has acquired for the purpose of the Fingal agreement. Splashed all over the national media in September was a firm commitment that 13 schools would be built and up and running by 1 September 2008. Does the Minister stand by this commitment? If so, why can she not inform Dáil Éireann of the specific sites or their general locations?

The timeframe is ambitious. If the Minister was serious when she told the House that individual planning applications in respect of the 13 schools, which will be built off-site, would take at least three months, will the sites be ready for Fingal's children by 1 September 2008?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: I did not hold or arrange a press briefing. Fingal County Council organised it.

Deputy Brian Hayes: Is the council leading us astray?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: For the past couple of years, we have been working closely with the council regarding these sites. Site acquisitions are commercially sensitive and the amount of available land in many developed areas is limited. I cannot give specific details as to which sites are in play.

Deputy Brian Hayes: What about locations such as Blanchardstown and Castleknock?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: The general areas under consideration include Balbriggan, Skerries, Donabate, Lusk, Swords and the Dublin 15 area. Fingal County Council is working on the Department's behalf to acquire sites. We are further along in some cases than in others, but there is good co-operation. For commercial reasons, I am not in a position to give the details of individual sites.

Deputy Brian Hayes: How many of the 13 schools referred to in the Fingal model agreement have reached the planning application stage? Will the Minister give a definitive answer as to whether she is giving a commitment to the Dáil that the 13 schools in the agreement between the Department and the council, irrespective of last September's press conference, will be built and up and running by 1 September 2008? It is a straightforward question. I am not interested in the Gettysburg address.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: All schools that must be built are subject to site acquisitions, planning permission and construction. We are working actively in all three respects.

Deputy Brian Hayes: What about the 13 schools?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: They were announced by Fingal County Council, not by me.

Deputy Brian Hayes: Another pipe dream.

School Accommodation.

47. **Deputy Ulick Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Science if there is an ongoing review and analysis being carried out in the Kin-

vara catchment area, County Galway on the provision of a second level co-education school in Kinvara as a replacement for a school (details supplied); if a similar review was completed by the planning unit of her Department before the announcement of 16 May 2007 in which she stated that a new second level school would be provided in Kinvara; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28563/07]

Deputy Mary Hanafin: In light of increases in population in the south Galway area and the decision of the Sisters of Mercy to close Seamount college, Kinvara, on a phased basis, I determined that a new post-primary school would be required in the south Galway area. I asked the commission on school accommodation to conduct a survey of school accommodation in the area to determine the location of the proposed post-primary school and to identify other locations where additional school places may be required over the next five to ten years. Areas included in the survey are Oranmore-Clarinbridge, Claregalway, Athenry, Gort-Ardrahan and Kinvara. The commission placed an advertisement in the local and national media on 23 April inviting interested parties to submit their views in writing to the commission by 15 May. Some 25 written submissions were received from a range of individuals and organisations such as patrons, boards of management, teachers, parent groups, local communities and the Association of Secondary Teachers, ASTI. The commission noted that such a broad response was indicative of the strong support by the community for educational provision in the area and showed that solid links have been formed between the schools and their respective local communities.

The commission, consisting of a dedicated technical group and the secretariat, undertook a public consultation process. It met representatives of the ASTI staff from Seamount college in June 2007. On 16, 17 and 18 October it met all the patrons involved, representatives of boards of management, principal teachers, staff members and representatives of the Rescue Seamount Committee and paid visits to each of the post-primary schools in the area. The commission is currently engaged in an analysis of all key issues such as baptisms, demography and population, migration, diversity, primary and post-primary enrolment trends, regional and local authority plans for industry and housing, and house building. This analysis, in conjunction with information from those consulted, will facilitate the commission in reaching its conclusions and recommendations. I expect the commission's report will be submitted to me by the end of November.

When a new school has been approved a number of procedures and processes must be undertaken and these can take some time to complete. The main stages are identification and acquisition of a suitable site, the design of the building, the application for and granting of plan-

ning permission, invitation to seek tenders and construction.

Deputy Ulick Burke: I thank the Minister for her answer. Before 16 May a full analysis of the population trends in the Kinvara catchment area and south Galway in general was completed. Based on this analysis the Minister decided to provide for, and announced, the continuation of second-level education in Kinvara. Based on what the Minister has stated we are indulging in a further examination of south Galway from Gort to Athenry, Oranmore and Kinvara.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Does the Deputy have a question?

Deputy Ulick Burke: The trustees of Seamount college gave ground by allowing for an intake last September. That was not part of the agenda when they made their announcement nearly a year ago. They have shown they are committed to allowing for the replacement of Seamount college. The Minister has made her commitment subject to the intake for five years. Why cannot the Minister give a commitment and show a positive response to their commitment, which was not available 12 months ago? Although three sites have been identified, the Department of Education and Science's planning section has made no response to examine them as an initial step. Why cannot the Minister indicate, through her actions, to the trustees and management board of Seamount college that she is prepared to provide second level education in Kinvara and cut out the delay tactics? If we can build hospitals in three years, why cannot we build a second level school for 600 pupils in Kinvara in three years?

Deputy Brian Hayes: Hear, hear.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: The announcement earlier in the year was that if there was continuity of provision a school could be provided for Kinvara, if the school continued to take first year pupils for each of the next five years. I thank the Mercy Order for agreeing to take first year pupils this year, but there has been no agreement on the other years.

Deputy Ulick Burke: Cannot the Minister respond in kind?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: However there has been no agreement on the other years. The original intention on 16 May was that it would be for the next five years and this would allow for a continuity of provision. Any work before the summer related only to Kinvara, although we are aware of the population increases in other areas of south Galway, particularly around areas such as Ardrahan and Athenry. That is why those areas were also examined. It was an important opportunity for the commission to examine the population and meet all the relevant bodies

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

because any decision on a school in south Galway will impact on the existing schools, for example Oranmore and Gort. The process undertaken is extensive. I expect to have the report at the end of November and look forward to making a decision on it. The Deputy mentioned a school of 500 or 600 pupils, but I expect that any school would be at least 700 or 800. We would seek a site appropriate for that number of students and that would ensure it was the proper catchment for where the greatest population is. All these issues must be taken into account. It is not an immediate priority that must be done today or tomorrow because there is a school there, whereas some areas have no school—

Deputy Ulick Burke: The Minister said it was a priority and that she would take immediate action.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: I made it clear that if the Mercy Order agreed to take first years each year for five years we would be able to allow continuity and that would give us the opportunity to have a school built by 2012. I again thank the Mercy Order for its co-operation in agreeing to take first years this year.

Deputy Ulick Burke: Can the Minister confirm for the people of south Galway, particularly in Kinvara, that she is talking about a replacement for Seamount college in Kinvara? It is important that she clarify this. The Minister knows that Gort community school is severely overcrowded. Schools in Oranmore and Athenry are also overcrowded. The population in this area is, uniquely, increasing by 8% per annum. All the numbers in the schools have already been identified and the Minister has them.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: The Deputy is correct that the population has grown substantially in those areas. That is why we have done the study and will determine the correct location for it.

Deputy Ulick Burke: Did the Minister make the decision on 6 April, before the general election, on false information?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: No, the decision stands. There will be a new post-primary school in the south Galway area.

Deputy Ulick Burke: Will it be in Kinvara?

School Transport.

48. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Education and Science if she is satisfied that the fleet for transporting school children is up to standard mechanically with seat belts fitted and that pick up and set down locations for students are in accordance with best safety standards; the checks carried out to ensure that they are in

place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28564/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey): The safety of children travelling on the school transport service is of paramount importance to my Department and to Bus Éireann, which operates the school transport scheme. To this end, Bus Éireann has a wide range of checking procedures in place, in addition to statutory vehicle examinations, to ensure, as far as reasonably possible, that a safe and reliable service is delivered. These procedures are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that appropriate standards are maintained and improved upon, where possible. In recent years, a range of measures to enhance safety and to improve the quality of the school transport service has been put in place, both in the vicinity of and on board school buses. These measures include the phasing out of the three-for-two seating arrangement on primary and post-primary services and providing all children with an individual seat equipped with a seat belt.

The planning of school bus routes, which includes designating pick-up and set-down points, is an operational matter for Bus Éireann. However, my Department and Bus Éireann are conscious of the fact that, in spite of the highest safety standards being applied, children are more at risk of being injured in the vicinity of a bus than travelling on the bus itself. A warning flashing light pilot scheme on school buses was launched in Ennis, County Clare in 2005 and a further phase of the pilot scheme will commence in the coming weeks in a number of other designated areas.

All vehicles operating under the school transport scheme are required to meet the statutory regulations as laid down by the Department of Transport. Vehicles with more than eight adult seats and which are more than one year old, are required to pass the Department of Transport's annual roadworthiness test. Private operators employed by Bus Éireann under the school transport scheme are contractually obliged to keep their nominated vehicles in a safe and roadworthy condition at all times. These contractors are required to meet an extensive range of regulations and standards as set out by the Department of Transport for use of buses in a public place.

Bus Éireann conducts on-the-road service checks using 40 mobile school bus inspectors, who board the buses in the course of their checks to ensure the vehicle and driver are as nominated, and to check that other safety requirements are being observed. Follow-up action is taken by the local Bus Éireann office, which can include termination of contract if deficiencies are detected. A leading international independent agency has been engaged by Bus Éireann to carry out mechanically-based checks on a random basis on both Bus Éireann and privately-owned con-

tractors' vehicles operating under the scheme throughout the country. In conjunction with this exercise, the same agency is carrying out audits of maintenance procedures in use by school bus contractors to make sure they meet best industry standards.

Deputy Frank Feighan: I thank the Minister of State for his reply. We were very concerned that the importance of safety on school buses might not be paramount in the Department so I appreciate that. The Minister of State highlighted that he is phasing out three for two seat belts, but he has been phasing it out for a long time. Is it in the process of being phased out or has the process been completed? Has every student got an individual seat belt and is the rule being enforced?

Deputy Seán Haughey: The phasing out process was completed in December 2006. As part of the school bus transport scheme, every student now has a seat belt and retrospective fitting of seat belts occurred in many cases.

Deputy Frank Feighan: The Minister also rightly highlighted the fact that many accidents occur at school bus stops. If the pilot scheme introduced in County Clare was successful, more should be done to introduce more schemes. This happened in early 2005, yet nearly three years later no other scheme has been introduced. We want to see results and safety for every bus stop in the country, especially when we are talking about school transport.

Deputy Seán Haughey: There is a danger in having children in the vicinity of the school bus, which was identified by my Department and by Bus Éireann. The pilot scheme worked well and a number of areas are under consideration for an extension of the scheme. We have identified places and we hope to extend the scheme to them in the coming weeks.

Other Questions.

Sex Education.

49. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to her reply to Parliamentary Question No. 156 of 2 October 2007, if the promotion of safe homosexual sex education is part of the relationships and sexuality education programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28458/07]

Deputy Mary Hanafin: Relationships and sexuality education, RSE, is embedded in the social, personal and health education curriculum in primary schools and in the junior cycle. In the senior cycle, schools are also required to deliver an RSE programme. Sexual orientation and safe sex are not featured as part of the curriculum in

primary schools, but the generic skills and values for respecting difference and relating to others are fostered. The SPHE programme is designed to promote the personal development, health and well-being of the individual child, to help the child to create and maintain supportive relationships and to become an active responsible citizen in society. The curriculum is built around three strands — Myself, Myself and Others and Myself and the Wider World, and it deals with issues such as making decisions, developing self-confidence, growing and changing, personal safety, relating to friends, family and others, handling conflict, respecting difference and developing awareness of bullying.

At junior cycle, these themes are continued. The relationships and sexuality education component of the programme focuses on issues such as hygiene, puberty, reproduction, pregnancy, resisting peer pressure, relationships, and accepting difference. The programme is supported by a comprehensive resource pack which includes lesson plans, case studies and activities. The topics include areas such as teenage pregnancy, understanding how certain behaviour can put students at risk, discussion on the implications of sexual activity, gender stereotyping, misconceptions about homosexuals and the importance of respect and tolerance when relating to others.

At senior cycle, the RSE programme includes in-depth coverage relating to reproduction, puberty, sexuality, family planning, contraception, responsible parenthood, implications of sexual activity, sexually transmitted infections, accepting sexual orientation, as well as relationships issues. Sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexual abuse are also covered, with where to seek help. The materials include case studies and quizzes designed to promote discussion and to dispel common myths about sex, pregnancy and so on.

Regarding sexual orientation, the emphasis is on recognising the ways different sexual orientations can be discriminated against, discussion of attitudes to sexual orientation, and understanding the need to value and respect difference. A recent evaluation of the implementation of RSE in second level schools, while highlighting many positive developments, has indicated that the content of the programme is being implemented selectively. Students reported that they consider that the topics of contraception, safe sex, condom use and sexual orientation are not adequately dealt with. In response, work is under way on the development of lesson plans linked to a DVD resource for teachers on contraception, sexually transmitted infections and sexual orientation, in collaboration with the Health Services Executive and the Crisis Pregnancy Agency. The contract for this work has been awarded by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and work is well under way. This will be important in ensuring consistency of treatment of these issues in the curriculum, and

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

in helping to ensure that teachers feel better equipped and more confident to deliver this aspect of the programme.

Development by the NCCA of a social personal and health education programme at senior cycle is also at an advanced stage and I look forward to receiving its recommendations at an early date.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I thank the Minister for her comprehensive reply. When will the Crisis Pregnancy Agency complete the contract that has been awarded? When will the product of that contract be distributed to the relevant schools?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: As soon as it is completed it will be distributed to all schools. I am not sure of the timescale, but it is sensitive work because the schools must be able to use it themselves, and some training will also be involved. There have already been workshops for the teachers, which we made available in regional areas. We have found that the younger teachers are more comfortable with it. I do not have a date on when it will be completed.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: The Minister's reply on 2 October and today refers to a DVD related course. When will that product be completed?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: I have just answered the Deputy twice. I do not have a date for its completion. As soon as it is completed, it will be circulated to all the schools.

State Examinations.

50. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the charge proposed to be levied on students wishing to sit the 2008 leaving certificate examinations; the charges that were levied in each year from 2002 to date in 2007; the way these charges are calculated; the discussions undertaken with other Departments and agencies, including the Department of Social and Family Affairs, before setting these charges; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28478/07]

Deputy Mary Hanafin: Entry fees for the 2008 leaving certificate examination have not yet been determined. I expect that a decision will be taken very shortly with a view to announcing the new fee levels before the end of the current school term. The standard leaving certificate examination fee that applied for the years 2002-07 are as follows: 2002, €73; 2003, €76; 2004, €86; 2005, €90; 2006, €92; and 2007, €96. Examination fees are generally increased each year in line with increases in the consumer price index. It has not been the practice to hold discussions with the Department of Social and Family Affairs or any other Government agency before setting examin-

ation fee levels. There is an alleviation scheme in place whereby current medical card holders and their dependents are exempt from the payment of examination fees. This exemption applies to approximately 30% of all examination candidates each year.

The income received from examination fees generally covers only a fraction of the cost of running the examinations. The costs associated with examinations have been increasing significantly in recent years due to the introduction of new methods of assessment in various subjects and continuing increases in special arrangements for students with special needs.

School Curriculum.

51. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Education and Science if she will confirm that no regulations concerning the prescribing of the revised curriculum have to date come before the Houses of the Oireachtas; when she will do so; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28342/07]

Deputy Mary Hanafin: The revised primary curriculum was developed in partnership with key education interests by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and published and launched by my Department in 1999. A copy of the curriculum, in the form of 23 books, was issued to every teacher. Implementation has been effected on a phased basis, supported by national programmes of professional development for teachers, full details of which have also been communicated to schools at each stage of the process.

The curriculum provides an integrated programme of learning in the spheres of languages, mathematics, social, environmental and scientific education and so on. The curriculum in religion is developed by the various church authorities and not by the NCCA. All schools are required to teach all aspects of the curriculum in all grades from junior infants through to sixth class, inclusive. While flexibility is in-built to facilitate local choice of discretionary curriculum time, the curriculum sets out a suggested minimum weekly timeframe for each subject area. In the curriculum for each subject area, a set of learning objectives is set out for four groupings, namely, infant classes, first and second class, third and fourth class, and fifth and sixth class.

Regulations in the form of a statutory instrument to prescribe the revised primary school curriculum have not been put in place. The rules for national schools, together with Department circulars and documents issued to schools, constitute administrative measures governing the recognition, operation, management and conduct of national schools. While these rules, circulars and documents are non-statutory, they are lawful measures which have been judicially considered

and accorded the imprimatur of the Irish courts on a number of occasions.

The Education Act 1998 provides the Minister with the power to make regulations relating to a range of issues concerning the provision of education by schools. I favour the incremental use of those regulatory powers where appropriate to replace existing rules, circulars and communications with schools.

Deputy Brian Hayes: The Minister will be aware of a recent case initiated in the High Court concerning Irish language immersion at a young age. While I do not wish to comment on the particulars of this ongoing case, the persons who brought the case have been allowed to have the matter dealt with further in the High Court. It came to attention early in the court case that at no stage since the revised curriculum was adopted by the Department and the Minister has it been given statutory effect by way of regulations. Is the Minister aware of any advice from the Department to effectively put the revised curriculum on a statutory footing?

I understand that on several occasions, officials in the Department have advised her to this effect, as highlighted by an investigative journalism report by TG4. Given the import of the curriculum and circulars that followed it since 1999, it would make more sense to put it in a statutory form to ensure its legal certainty.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: There is a value to putting circulars on a regulatory basis. As I stated, the curriculum is not currently on a basis of regulation. That does not mean it cannot be implemented, as can any of the other instructions given to schools. The High Court has found in the past that items such as circulars have legal effect. It would be valuable to put the circulars on a statutory footing, removing any legal uncertainty. At the same time, it does not take from the right of any Minister to issue circulars or instructions. We will be doing that.

Deputy Brian Hayes: The answer to the question is that the Minister has decided that on foot of the investigative piece by TG4—

Deputy Mary Hanafin: No, it is not on foot of that.

Deputy Brian Hayes: It certainly looks like it. This story was broken by TG4 three weeks ago. Since then there has been much toing and froing and a court case has started. The Minister is now telling the Dáil she will put this on a legal basis. When will she do that?

Is the Minister concerned that some of the circulars following the revised curriculum in place since 1999 could now be legally defective? If this issue is applicable to Irish language immersion in gaeilcoileanna, it must be applicable to other cir-

culars which the Minister has failed to sign into law during her tenure.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: There is absolutely no need to sign circulars into law. Over the years, the courts have clearly determined that rules, regulations and circulars have been given a legal basis and have the same understanding as if laid down in law. Where circulars have been issued, they do have a standing and status and must be implemented. The only development in the referred court case was that the court determined that there shall be a judicial review. No determination has been made on the merits or the value of the case.

The Minister of the day has the right to make rules. This goes back to the mid-19th century when rules for national schools were introduced. This was replaced with rules for national schools in 1922. In 1935 the Ministers and Secretaries Act put the drawing up of rules under the remit of the Minister for Education. The rules for establishing new schools make it clear that a school can only be recognised if it implements the curriculum. I have no concerns, therefore, with issued circulars and the legal basis which they hold.

Deputy Brian Hayes: Did the Minister receive any advice from her officials that she should have signed the revised curriculum by way of a statutory instrument? When will the Minister place such a statutory instrument in the Oireachtas Library for the notice of Members?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: Officials in the Department have been working for some time on the regulations for the primary school curriculum. The circular which I issued in the summer relating to teanga oideachais has sufficient basis and there is no need to put it on a statutory footing.

Deputy Brian Hayes: Did the Minister get advice on this?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: I do not believe I have advice that I must put it on a statutory footing.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio.

52. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Science further to her reply to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 125, 150 and 158 of 2 October 2007 the reason for the discrepancy in the promise in the programme for Government to reduce the primary pupil-teacher ratio to one primary teacher for every 24 primary pupils by 2010 when she herself asserts that the primary pupil teacher ratio already stands at 16:1 as stated in her reply to the parliamentary questions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28459/07]

Deputy Mary Hanafin: The referred commitment in the programme for Government relates

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

to a reduction in class sizes, through improvements in the staffing schedule by which classroom teachers are assigned to schools. The pupil-teacher ratio on the other hand, counts all the teachers in schools, not only those employed as mainstream classroom teachers, but also those working in areas such as resource teaching and language support.

There are now 5,000 more primary teachers than in 2002. The estimated annual value of additional expenditure on these posts is approximately €300 million. As a result of the appointment of extra teachers, the pupil-teacher ratio has been reduced to 16.4:1. In addition to mainstream class teaching duties, additional posts have been used for other improvements. These include the introduction of the general allocation model for deploying learning support-resource teachers in September 2005 and the allocation of additional learning support-resource teachers. There has been a major expansion in the number of language support teachers meaning some schools have six language support teachers each; the appointment of administrative principals for schools with principal and four or five mainstream teachers which also has a specialist autism unit; and the appointment of administrative deputy principals for the first time.

The staffing schedule for the allocation of mainstream classroom teachers to schools has also been improved. In the 2005-06 school year, schools were staffed on the basis of a general rule of at least one classroom teacher for every 29 children. This year it was reduced to one for 27.

The threshold for getting a developing school post has also been reduced in recent years specifically to help schools that are seeing large increases in enrolments each year. More than 330 such posts have been sanctioned in the 2007-08 school year compared to 117 in 2003-04.

The programme for Government commitment involves further improvements in the staffing schedule for primary schools so that subject to financial consideration schools would be staffed on the basis of a general rule of at least one classroom teacher for every 24 pupils.

The improvements made in primary school staffing in recent years are unparalleled. The Government is committed to providing more primary teachers over the next five years. We will also continue our focus on measures to improve the quality of education in our primary schools to ensure increased resources lead to better outcomes.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: The Minister's reply clarifies what many ordinary people, particularly parents, find confusing at times. There is the ratio of teachers to pupils, which includes staff pupils may never see, and the pupil-teacher ratio in the classroom. Will the Minister confirm that the pupil-teacher ratio in the classroom is 1:27?

Deputy Mary Hanafin: No, it is unfair to say there are teachers in schools whom pupils may never see. The people who are not counted in class-size number are the principal, deputy principal, home-school liaison officers, resource, learning support and special needs teachers. These are staff the pupils will see every day but they are not teaching, say, Irish, English, maths, history, geography in the classroom.

The Deputy is wrong in how he put his question. The average class-size is determined by the number of mainstream classroom teachers divided by the number of children. Schools are allocated a teacher for every 27 children. Smaller schools are much more generous; for example, one can get schools consisting of 12 children that can have two teachers. The pupil-teacher ratio is calculated by every teacher in a school, whether it is a classroom or learning support teacher, divided by the number of students. That is why it is as low as 1:16 in some schools.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: Parents with little or no experience of the bureaucracy of the Department of Education and Science or the science associated with teaching will be concerned as to how many other children will be in first, second or third class along with their Máire or Johnny. All other non-classroom teachers are seen as backup and support. Parents' main concern is the actual ratio of primary school teachers to the number of children in a classroom in those critical schoolgoing years. Will the Minister agree on some clarity in conveying this information to the wider public and the House? To judge by the answer I received on 2 October the Minister can manipulate the figures to produce different kinds of results. While I am not accusing the Minister of doing that I seek clarity so that parents understand how many pupils there are in their children's classrooms.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: Class size may be an issue for the parent whose child does not need anything extra. The special needs and resource teachers are necessary for the child who has a learning difficulty. The 1,800 teachers who teach nothing but English to newcomers are important for the children who do not speak English. The home-school community liaison teacher is important for the parent who needs support to link in.

Class size is an issue for some people but schools are staffed for their mainstream classroom teacher in the ratio of 1:27. There is no international evidence to show that class size makes a whit of difference to the outcomes except in the lowest classes. Notwithstanding that it makes no difference up the line, we have made a commitment to ensure that we continue to reduce class size but it is equally important that the other supports are available too. If in the past three years all the teachers who went into special needs and language teaching had been employed

to reduce class sizes the ratio would be approximately 1:15 but we had to prioritise the most vulnerable people such as the disadvantaged who have small class sizes, those with special educational needs and newcomers who do not speak English.

School Admissions.

53. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Science if she has satisfied herself that the admissions policy employed by secondary schools is fully compliant with all of the requirements under existing Irish legislation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28288/07]

Deputy Mary Hanafin: The Education Act 1998 requires all schools to have in place an admissions policy, detailing admission to and participation by students, including those with special needs, in the school. An agreement was reached in 1993 between the Department and the national representatives of the managerial associations regarding selection of pupils on the basis of academic ability. While school enrolment policy is a matter for the managerial authorities of each individual school, it was agreed that selection on the basis of academic ability was to be discontinued. It was also agreed that each school should disclose its enrolment policy and the criteria used in selecting pupils for enrolment.

It was accepted that where schools receive more enrolment applications than they can cater for, a selection procedure is necessary. Schools adopt different selection procedures in such cases, for example, priority given to pupils from national schools in the area; enrolment on a first-come, first-served basis; random selection on the basis of age of applicants; priority given to brothers and sisters of pupils already enrolled in the school; and to pupils of a particular religious denomination. While enrolment procedures such as those are broadly acceptable, all the parties to the agreement emphasised the importance which they attach to the principle of the school working in and for the community it serves. On that basis, post-primary schools should emphasise catering, in the first instance, for children from their own communities and catchment areas. In formulating its admissions policy a school must ensure it is lawful. In particular, it must act in accordance with section 7 of the Equal Status Act 2000.

My Department has issued an information booklet to schools entitled Schools and the Equal Status Acts. The booklet identifies ways in which the rights conferred and the duties imposed by this legislation, together with the education legislation can be used as building blocks for the creation of an inclusive school. Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 allows the parents of a student who has been refused enrolment in a school to appeal that decision to the Secretary General of the Department. Where an appeal is

upheld the Secretary General is empowered to direct the school to enrol the student. When considering an appeal of a decision of refusal to enrol, the appeals committee may consider the admissions policy of the school and on occasion an appeals committee has advised a school in its determination to revisit its admissions policy. The determination of an appeals committee is issued to all the parties to an appeal.

Deputy Jim O’Keeffe: Over a year ago the Minister announced that she was conducting an audit of admissions policies particularly in respect of newcomer families and those with special needs. When will that audit be published? Following the audit, is the Minister satisfied with enrolment policies? Does she intend to bring forward any new policy proposals in respect of admissions?

Deputy Brian Hayes: Are not some schools very selective in the way they decide not to take in children with special needs? I agree with what the Minister said on this subject last year but we need to do something about it and ensure there is a rigorous process making clear that this kind of activity is unacceptable. Is the Minister aware that it is also the policy of some secondary schools to require children in an existing primary school to leave that school and go into a private primary school before admission to their school? A range of these issues needs sorting out and we need clear answers from the Minister.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: An audit was conducted of approximately 50% of schools examining the treatment of those with special needs, Travellers, newcomers etc. I am not inclined to publish it because that might give rise to league tables in certain areas which would pressurise the schools that take a significant number of children with special needs. Publishing results for an area could give the impression that a particular school took only children with special needs which would be unfair to the school. It does however provide me with valuable information for determining the future policy direction. I do not have the final statistics but the preliminary results show that some schools are taking more than their share of children with special needs. Giving resources to the schools helps to smooth that difference.

Deputy Enda Kenny: They are carrying children up the stairs in the school in Ballina.

Written Answers follow Adjournment Debate.

Adjournment Debate Matters.

An Ceann Comhairle: I wish to advise the House of the following matters in respect of which notice has been given under Standing Order 21 and the name of the Member in each case: (1) Deputy James Bannon — to outline what if any, plans are in place, for a cohesive

[An Ceann Comhairle.]

policy to expedite the development of slurry generated electricity; (2) Deputy Ulick Burke — to indicate the reasons for the delay in publishing the conditions and guidelines for the implementation of the mid-Shannon tax incentive scheme which was announced in the budget of 2006; (3) Deputy Deirdre Clune — the need to ensure that the regeneration of the Cork docklands area is facilitated through tax incentives; (4) Deputy Rory O'Hanlon — to discuss further the reply to parliamentary Questions Nos. 523 and 524 of Tuesday, 6 November; (5) Deputy Denis Naughten — a staffing grant for a child care group in County Roscommon; (6) Deputy Leo Varadkar — noting that the local electoral boundaries have not been reviewed since 1998 and noting the massive development that has occurred in many suburban areas and county towns in the interregnum, Dáil Éireann calls on the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to appoint a boundary commission to redraw the local electoral boundaries in advance of the 2009 local elections; (7) Deputy Michael Lowry — the need to encourage industrialists and investors to locate in north Tipperary; (8) Deputy Joe Costello — to enact the Judicial Council Bill without delay; (9) Deputy Mary O'Rourke — if the Minister for Health and Children will outline fully all the arrangements which are being put in place for women from Longford-Westmeath who previously had been treated in Mullingar and who are now being told to present themselves to the Mater Hospital in Dublin; (10) Deputy Tom Hayes — whether the tax rebate system for diesel costs for scheduled bus services will be revoked as per a planned EU directive; if so, when this will occur; if an alternative system of funding will be set in place as happened in England earlier this year; if so, what form this funding will take; if the Minister is aware that 82% of school transport is privately contracted, and that these contractors agreed their contacts with the Government before they knew about the removal of this rebate; how long the Government has known about this EU directive; how the bus tour and the private rural transport industries are to cope with this 32 cent increase per litre of diesel in addition to rising diesel prices; and if the Minister for Finance can make a statement on forthcoming plans for this situation, covering the economic impact as well as the impact on small and large companies, rural transport and on school transport, as many companies may not be able to honour their contracts, detailing precisely what support CIE will get from the Government; (11) Deputy Timmy Dooley — in light of the recent fire at a commercial premises in Ennis, County Clare, concern has been raised at the lack of water pressure to deal with this and other emergency situations. I call on the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to investigate the matter, and request him to consider such remedial works as are necessary

to ensure an adequate supply and pressure of water to assist the fire service in dealing with any further fires in Ennis; (13) Deputy Joan Burton — the proposed VEC primary school for Diswellstown, Castleknock, Dublin 15; and (14) Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin — to provide additional beds, isolation units and single rooms to combat the continuing spread of MRSA and other very serious and potentially fatal infections in our hospitals in light of the report from Beaumont Hospital in Dublin that it is unable to isolate one third of patients with MRSA due to insufficient bed capacity.

The matters raised by Deputies Naughten, Lowry, Burton and O'Hanlon have been selected for discussion.

Leaders' Questions.

An Ceann Comhairle: Anois, Ceisteanna na gCeannearaí, Ceannaire an Fhreasúra, An Teachta Enda Kenny.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Tá feabhas ag teacht ar Ghaeilge an Cheann Chomhairle lá i ndiaidh lae. Tá sé ag déanamh go maith agus sílim go bhfuil sé ag cleachtadh a chuid ráiteas.

Deputy Mary Hanafin: Tá gaeltacht in a dáil-cheantair.

Deputy Enda Kenny: The third national hygiene audit of hospitals was published today and does not make encouraging reading. The results show that not one of our public hospitals has been found to have a "very good" standard of hygiene. Seven were rated as "good", 35 were "fair" and nine were "very poor" or "poor". The results show that the standard has deteriorated since the Health Service Executive published the second audit in June 2006. That audit rated 32 hospitals as "good", 19 as "fair" and only two as "poor" compared with nine today. This confirms what most people believe, that the standards of hygiene and hygiene management programmes in our public hospitals are not what they should be. People are scared that hospital acquired infections such as MRSA and those derived from other superbugs are a real threat to patient safety in hospitals and other health care settings. We are spending €15 billion on the health care system and every member of the public understands that it is a fundamental requirement that hospitals be clean.

I accept the inspections were unannounced and that in many cases hospitals might be clean on the day of the inspection. However, the issue is that many hospitals do not have a sufficiently robust hospital management hygiene programme. That is resource and skills related. In many cases, with respect, contract cleaners, who do their best, may not have the specialist training and skill to deal with hospitals where there is a risk of spreading MRSA and other superbugs. The difference between the days of matrons running hospitals

and the hospital management system that exists now is that standards of hygiene in many hospitals now are lower and this is reflected in the findings of the third report today. Can the Taoiseach honestly say that the management system in our public hospitals is ready to put forward its public hospital hygiene management programme? Can we as citizens and politicians say the programme is ready, the standards are set, the resources are in place and we will see continued improvement in what is so fundamental? Everyone who enters a hospital should be aware of how important it is to be involved in the hygiene management programme. Is there a sufficiently robust programme in every hospital as a result of this third audit?

The Taoiseach: I wish to point out that this is the first national hygiene services quality review report from the Health Information and Quality Authority, HIQA, the new agency the Government promised. This report cannot be compared with the previous ones because it was carried out on a different basis. The report is part of an important new development in the Irish health service that will see standards set, monitored and reported on objectively.

The report gives the results of the review conducted in the 51 acute hospitals between March and September. While hospitals generally performed well in the areas of hygiene and in-service delivery, the results on governance were poor — that aspect was not included in previous reports. This contributed to disappointing overall results. While improvements have been made and are acknowledged in the report, no hospital received a very good rating. Seven were categorised as good, 35 as fair and nine as poor. The clear message of the report is that hospital managers and health boards must take hygiene and infection control seriously.

The method of assessment and the criteria used in the latest report are substantially different and, rightly, more onerous than those pertaining to the previous audits carried out by the Health Service Executive, HSE, and the results, therefore are not comparable. Previous audits concentrated only on service delivery.

The review also includes assessments of corporate management to ensure efforts at governing, identifying, managing and reducing infections are sustained. Hospitals should concentrate more on these matters because while hospitals generally perform well on hygiene, governance is poor. The audit shows that there are weaknesses in some hospitals relating to the priority placed on hospital hygiene — that is the governance issue. Today's report gives us an opportunity to impress upon the management of each hospital the improvements that must be made to make hospitals cleaner.

I agree with Deputy Kenny's comments on the superiority of the old system of matrons and religious orders and I worked under such a

regime. They moved heaven and earth on the wards to ensure hygiene prevailed and my generation will remember the smell associated with hospital hygiene that is no longer evident today.

Deputy Enda Kenny: That was Jeye's fluid.

The Taoiseach: This will serve as notice to corporate management in hospitals to make hygiene a far higher priority in the coming months and years.

I welcome HIQA's emphasis on a whole-system approach to hygiene, which makes this the most comprehensive quality review of any kind in Ireland. The review is intended to provide a detailed assessment of performance across the entire range of areas that impact upon hygiene so individual hospitals can identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement.

The challenge laid down by this new report, the first of its kind, is for management, from senior management down through the system, to do far better. The report also aims to see contractors in hospitals abiding by far higher standards — they are, frankly, being paid enough and should abide by the standards set by HIQA.

The Health Information and Quality Authority is the organisation to drive standards and to fight the difficulties posed by hygiene problems, MRSA and other infections in the health system not only in this country but in other countries. This report has set the benchmark against which people will be judged and improvements are needed, particularly in the area of governance.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I wish to draw the Taoiseach's attention to what he said in his reply. The first two reports were carried out for the HSE by external contractors from the UK. This report was carried out by HIQA, which evolved from the Health Service Accreditation Board, using peer review group systems here so it is more robust. The Taoiseach suggests the first two reports cannot be compared to the latest one but the Department of Health and Children terms this audit as the third report. The Department of Health and Children and the HSE relied on standards set in the previous two reports, which were conducted for the HSE by external contractors. If the figures in the first two reports were inaccurately positive, the Department of Health and Children deems this as HIQA's report.

The Taoiseach has not said whether he is satisfied that every hospital has a real hygiene management programme. He mentioned that contractors are paid enough to do their jobs but does he not feel that to realise the high standards to which everyone is entitled, pay should be related to reform of the health service? This does not appear to be Government policy in other areas regarding performance and pay.

Problems like this will arise because hospitals here operate at 100% occupancy while international best practice suggests 85% is the correct

[Deputy Enda Kenny.]

level. This is a problem in many hospitals; for example, Beaumont Hospital where one in three patients with MRSA cannot be isolated due to a lack of beds. This is a cause of huge concern for people attending hospital for treatment. The infection control team in Beaumont Hospital says that due to overcrowding, staff shortages and poor compliance with hand hygiene, outbreaks of otherwise preventable infections have occurred. However, it is good to note that many hospitals now provide the appropriate solution with which visitors can wash their hands.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, notes that Ireland has 2.8 acute hospital beds per 1,000 people compared to the OECD average of 3.9. Does the Taoiseach accept that more hospital beds are needed to allow trained specialist cleaners deal with the high levels of bed occupancy?

Does the Taoiseach accept, despite the many promises of his Government and the absent Minister for Health and Children, this report is another indication of his failure to implement a management system which oversees a public hospital hygiene programme that will stand up to scrutiny? I am glad that the inspections were unannounced but an ongoing hospital hygiene programme is needed. Will inspections of private hospitals be carried out in the same manner?

The Taoiseach: There was no report before the previous two reports and the reason we wanted to tackle the hygiene problem in hospitals was that there were no benchmarks. There was no league table to help us examine the health service and enforce standards.

The point I made on my first intervention was that the method of assessment and criteria used in this report are substantially different from and more demanding than the previous audits carried out by the HSE. I support that, but my point is that they are not comparable and, therefore, neither are the results. Previous audits concentrated totally on service delivery. Issues of governance, management and the need to reduce infection must be considered. That is a better way of doing it. Nevertheless, there is huge room for improvement. The overriding message in this report is that most hospitals can and should do better. The criteria that now pertain under the national hygiene services quality review will be followed up into the future. That sets a new standard.

We have stated that we will provide, in the lifetime of this Government, additional staffing to deal with health care acquired infections, particularly MRSA. We are working to ensure the Health Information Quality Authority sets and enforces a clear standard for health and information and that the new system of licences will put a strong emphasis on infection control. HIQA will work to reduce significantly health care acquired infections in hospitals. We must take

into account the need to guard against infection in the refurbishment of existing hospitals and the construction of new hospitals. The authority will establish a specific financial incentive that will reward hospitals that achieve excellence in hygiene standards, thus ensuring management concentrates on hygiene as a major issue. HIQA will continue to carry out regular hygiene audits without notice, at minimum annually, and will publish the results. It will also introduce measures to reduce the prescribing of antibiotics, which is part of the problem in terms of health care acquired infections.

It should be noted that, according to the service delivery section of the report, most hospitals achieved either extensive or exceptional compliance with the standards. The majority of hospitals have a multidisciplinary team in place to oversee hygiene practices, but most of these teams were newly established and roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined. We have some way to go to embed that culture and practice of measuring, monitoring and improving. Where risks were identified, these were notified to the individual hospitals and are receiving attention. A quality improvement plan must now be drawn up by all hospitals individually and collectively by the HSE. This will continue to be monitored by HIQA as part of its ongoing quality assurance efforts. The establishment of HIQA means we are now seeing a regulatory management system being put in place. This will force hospitals into a position where they must take account of these issues.

The issue raised by Beaumont Hospital and other hospitals regarding hygiene, particularly hand hygiene in wards, is important. One of the reasons for limited visiting hours in hospitals in previous times was to control hygiene matters. This is no longer the case and people can visit for extensive hours during the day. Hand hygiene issues are difficult to enforce when that happens, as we have been told by hospital management. It is something that must be enforced, however, because, according to this and other reports, it is one of the most important issues in maintaining hygiene standards in hospital wards.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: In recent weeks there has been much public debate about the quality and adequacy of cancer care services. It is fair to say that public confidence in these services is low. The solution proposed by almost everybody is the notion of centres of excellence. It is the strategy being put forward by the Government and the HSE, and all political parties as well as most medical professionals have subscribed to the idea.

However, I am not clear as to what the Government means by "centres of excellence". How many such centres will there be? Professor O'Higgins spoke about 12 in his first report but the HSE now seems to have eight in mind. The announcement by the executive in September identified eight "designated cancer care centres".

Will these be the eight centres of excellence? Has the Government approved those eight centres? What is the position regarding the north west? The Minister of State, Deputy Jimmy Devins, seemed to indicate that Sligo will be added to the list at some point. Will there be nine centres of excellence rather than eight?

In regard to the timescale, the HSE has stated that all cancer care services will be transferred to these eight centres by the end of 2009. Where does this leave cancer care services that are being provided in private facilities? Is it intended that they will continue separately or will they also be transferred to the centres of excellence? How will we know that a centre of excellence has been deemed to be such? Will there be some statement to the effect that there is now a centre of cancer care excellence in Hospital X? Is there some formal process by which it will be communicated to the public that these centres of excellence are in operation?

What is the budget? The chairman of the working group overseeing the plan, Mr. O'Brien, says that no costings or budget have yet been worked out for its implementation. Professor Keane, the interim director of the cancer care programme, says transitional funding will be needed in the next two years to bring the centres of excellence into being. However, it seems no budget has been identified. How will they be funded?

The Taoiseach: I will try to answer as many of the Deputy's questions as possible. In June, the Minister for Health and Children approved the national quality assurance standards for symptomatic breast disease services under the Health Act. The aim of the standards is to ensure that every woman who develops breast cancer has an equal opportunity to be treated in a centre that is capable of delivering the best possible outcome. In September, arising from the designation of cancer centres and to comply with those standards, the HSE directed 13 hospitals with low case volumes — fewer than 20 procedures — to cease breast cancer services immediately, to be followed by a further staged reduction in the number of hospitals providing cancer services from 22 to eight.

Several of these hospitals have in practice already discontinued or are in the process of discontinuing symptomatic breast services. The National Hospitals Office has already planned the redirection of this symptomatic case load. Additional groups of hospitals will be similarly directed, and this process will go on, as the Deputy observed, for the next year or two. That will be done in line with the further development of quality assured capacity in the eight designated centres. The HSE plans to have completed 60% of that transition from the current 22 to eight designated breast centres by the end of next year, and 90% by the end of the following year.

Discussions between the HSE and the four managed cancer control networks will focus on

identifying the capacity issues for the eight designated centres so that a detailed transitional plan can be put in place to facilitate a progressive and carefully managed transfer of services in the next two years. That work has not yet been undertaken but it is the next issue. The HSE announced last week that within weeks, breast care services will be transferred in some of these hospitals and this will happen progressively.

In regard to cost, the development and improvement of diagnostic and treatment services for breast cancer patients is a major priority development for cancer care services. The national breast screening programme, combined with the quality-assured symptomatic breast disease services I have mentioned, is a key element of the cancer control programme. Resources totalling €60 million have been put into this already.

The next stage begins when Professor Keane takes up his role on Monday. When he examines the work over the next six weeks or so, he is expected to designate the national clinical leaders for radiation, surgery and medical oncology. Arrangements are in hand to enable him to take control of all cancer services between now and the Christmas period. From 1 January he will take charge of all existing cancer services and related funding and staffing.

He will start with the work done to date and take over everything as it progresses into 2008. As I understand it, he intends to designate the locations for a range of cancer specialties by early January, so he must make that call at that time when he is fully briefed on the position and the ongoing work. As soon as he arrives, he will engage in detailed planning to facilitate these designations and the orderly phased transfer of services between the locations. He plans to have completed 50% of that transition of services to cancer centres next year and 90% of the transition by the following year.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Taoiseach has described how we will have fewer centres providing cancer services. He has not said how these remaining eight or nine centres will be better. That is what the public wants to know about. For the past week or more we have been speaking about centres of excellence, and the expectation is that these will be better facilities than we have currently. How will they be better?

For example, last week it was announced that the service in Mullingar was to be discontinued and patients would be transferred to the Mater Hospital. What has happened in the Mater that will lead to a better service? Has it received extra equipment as a result of this? Will there be extra staff or is it just a case of the hospital having extra patients? How will the service be better in hospitals that will simply have extra patients?

The Taoiseach noted Professor Keane is due to start on 1 January. What budget will he have to provide the new and better services people are being led to believe will be provided? The diffi-

[Deputy Eamon Gilmore.]

culty is that there is now a general concern about the quality and availability of cancer care services, and there is a programme to reduce the number of centres where such services are being provided. This is being led on the basis that there will be centres of excellence but how will these centres be better?

Is this just a rationalisation of the number of centres and a reduction in the number of centres without the service in the larger centres necessarily being better?

The Taoiseach: Professor Keane will take over the entire budget. Every year we have allocated more resources, both in capital and on the current side. Much of this relates to staff. Last week I may have said 120 consultants were taken on, but 111 consultants have been taken on. The problem is these consultants are spread about in the system. It is important to emphasise that the decision to reorganise the service is about achieving optimum outcomes. It is not in itself a value judgment on work being done in the existing centres, some of which have a relatively large caseload at present but will not be part of the future centres.

The bottom line is that to achieve the very best outcomes, we must concentrate all cancer work in just the eight centres. That necessarily means that there must be reorganisation and resources must be applied. The discussion on management, designation and operational procedures must take place before these centres move. The relevant individuals will be involved with that.

We have progressively been reducing the number of centres, and we have already moved the number to 13. The object is to quickly designate the clinical national leaders for radiation, surgical and medical oncology. This is to ensure that in each centre there will be people who will be responsible, who will have a primary role along with Professor Keane. They will be responsible for radiation, surgical and medical oncology services.

We have been told there are multidisciplinary teams in some centres at present but this will bring such teams to work together. They will have the resources and the throughput. The argument is that the more patients being dealt with in centres, the more expertise is built up and we get quality staff. Without denigrating staff at any centres, this system attracts people with expertise and competence who can carry caseloads. They clearly need other facilities but that issue is being dealt with by the management of the various hospitals and the HSE.

Requests to move Adjournment of Dáil under Standing Order 32.

An Ceann Comhairle: Before coming to the Order of Business, I propose to deal with a number of notices under Standing Order 32. I will

call on Deputies in the order in which they submitted their notices to my office.

Deputy Olivia Mitchell: I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to discuss a matter of national importance, namely the impact on all private sector public transport providers, including all those providing vital commuter services, of the withdrawal without notice of the fuel excise duty rebate; the inequity of informing only public sector providers of proposed changes and the consequent disadvantage for their private competitors in contracts now signed for 2008 for school contracts, tour contracts and fare level decisions.

Deputy James Bannon: I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of national importance, namely the recommendation by a Minister of State, Deputy Conor Lenihan, for random drug testing of Deputies and the implication of such a call that the country is being run by representatives who are supporting the very drug barons they legislate against — a very serious inference.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Well done James.

Deputy Conor Lenihan: Will we start with Deputy Bannon?

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to discuss the following specific and important matter of national public interest, namely the serious inconvenience and disruption for commuters in areas of north and west Dublin as a result of the industrial dispute involving Dublin Bus drivers at the Harristown bus depot; the urgent need for intervention by the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, under Section 38 of the Industrial Relations Act 1990, to broker a resolution of the dispute to ensure the earliest possible restoration of full bus services and to ensure the dispute does not spread to other garages.

Deputy Arthur Morgan: I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to discuss a matter of national importance, namely that home help workers be treated fairly in terms of pay and conditions in the new contract with the HSE, that reasonable working hours and travel allowances be guaranteed and that the very important work undertaken by these low-paid workers be recognised and remunerated accordingly.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to address the following matter of national importance requiring urgent consideration, namely the need for immediate Government action to provide additional beds, isolation units and single rooms to combat the continuing spread

of MRSA and other very serious and potentially fatal infections in our hospitals in light of the report from Beaumont Hospital in Dublin that it is unable to isolate one-third of patients with MRSA due to insufficient bed capacity.

Deputy Martin Ferris: I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of national importance, namely to discuss the decision of the Environmental Protection Agency to grant a license to the Corrib gas consortium to proceed with the building of a gas refinery at Bellanaboy and the need for a much broader inquiry into all the implications which the placing of the refinery there will have for both the local population and the local natural environment.

An Ceann Comhairle: Having considered the matters raised, they are not in order under Standing Order 32.

Order of Business.

The Taoiseach: It is proposed to take No. 6, motion re Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2006; No. 7, motion re Criminal Justice (Mutual Assistance) Bill 2005 [*Seanad*]; No. 8, motion re Nuclear Test Ban Bill 2006; No. 9, motion re Control of Exports Bill 2007; No. 10, motion re Passports Bill 2007; and No. 2, Local Government (Roads Functions) Bill 2007 — Order for Second Stage and Second Stage. It is proposed, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders, that Nos. 6 to 10, inclusive, shall be decided without debate and Private Members' business will be No. 27, motion re proposed child care subvention scheme.

An Ceann Comhairle: There is one proposal to be put to the House. Is the proposal for dealing with Nos. 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 without debate agreed to? Agreed.

Deputy Enda Kenny: We know the 27 countries of the European Union will sign the reform treaty in Lisbon in December, that is a given. The Taoiseach indicated that the referendum would be held in the first half of 2008. This is a crucial challenge where the people of this country will make their decision on the treaty. As there is a maximum of 25 weeks, we should know approximately when the referendum will take place. We do not want to know the exact date but will it be after Easter and before the summer? Could the Taoiseach clarify this? Does the Government intend to hold the referendum on children's rights on the same day as the referendum on the European reform treaty?

In respect of the figures in the census, will the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government issue an order to the appropriate committee to look at the question of local electoral area boundaries? Some of them are out of line under the criteria laid down.

The Taoiseach disassociated himself from remarks that the Provisional movement is responsible for the murder of Mr. Paul Quinn. In view of the comments of the spokesman for the International Monitoring Commission, is the Taoiseach concerned there is a drift back to very serious activities by those involved? Has the Taoiseach spoken to Prime Minister Blair about it and does he intend to speak to the Northern Ireland Assembly about it?

Arising from Deputy Bannon's comments, it appears that RTE sources looked at a video where a Minister indicated he or she is involved in drug activity.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy has strayed far beyond the remit of the Order of Business, as he well knows.

Deputy Seán Power: He has even strayed back to the Blair era.

An Ceann Comhairle: It is not in order.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Is the Ceann Comhairle saying I am drifting away on the drugs issue?

An Ceann Comhairle: Yes.

Deputy Enda Kenny: The Taoiseach should ask his Ministers if any of them is involved in this and clear it up politically because no information will be forthcoming from the RTE source, although RTE sources say many things these days.

Will there be a Supplementary Estimate from the Taoiseach's Department for at least €38,000, plus appropriate amounts for assistant secretaries, secretaries and other persons in the higher public service?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Taoiseach on matters which are in order concerning legislation to deal with the referendum.

The Taoiseach: There are no Supplementary Estimates. I said previously that I would like to hold the two referendums on the one day if possible; the timing is a matter to be discussed by party leaders. We face a challenge in dealing with this and when it should be. It must be some time in the summer or early autumn because it must be ratified by 2008. We have a calendar year to deal with the issue. It will not be any earlier because if the treaty is signed in Lisbon or Brussels in December, we must have a referendum Bill and a referendum commission must be established while we get through the legislative work programme. It will take some months. I am happy, however, to discuss the issue. If we can do them together we will. It is not essential but it would be useful because the party leaders all made a commitment in April that we would deal with the children's issue within a year and there is a commitment to deal with the treaty in 2008.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform stated today that he intends to press ahead with the Defamation Bill to reform libel law but that he will park the Privacy Bill, originally introduced in tandem with the Defamation Bill and to go hand in hand with it. Will the Taoiseach clarify the Government's intention on the proposed Privacy Bill and, if the Government is not proceeding with it, will there be consequential changes to the Defamation Bill?

Deputy Kenny raised the issue of local government boundaries. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government said in response to a question from Deputy Burton on 1 November that the Government planned to produce a Green Paper in a couple of months and a White Paper some time next year. Meanwhile, the section of the Local Government Act that deals with the numbers of members of local authorities has not yet been commenced. In the meantime, political parties and those considering standing for local elections do not know what the boundaries will be. Will the Taoiseach bring some clarity to the issue soon? If we must wait for a Green Paper, then a White Paper, then a report from the Boundary Commission, the local elections will be upon us. We must have clarity on the electoral boundaries that will be contested in those elections.

The Taoiseach: Someone asked me about this two or three weeks ago and I stated that as soon as the European boundaries and the Oireachtas boundaries were changed, the Minister would immediately commence work on the local electoral areas. There will certainly be revision and the Department will start the process of alteration.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: When will we know?

The Taoiseach: It could take at least six months.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: To do what?

The Taoiseach: To do what?

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The numbers are available already. Why would it take six months?

Deputy Brian Hayes: Because the Taoiseach is worth it. He is great value for money.

The Taoiseach: Unfortunately, I am not doing it myself. I am telling the House what I have been told.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: That is cold comfort.

The Taoiseach: On the defamation legislation, we are proceeding with that Bill and the other Bill is before the Seanad.

Deputy Emmet Stagg: A number of Deputies in the previous Dáil repeatedly raised the issue of unregulated management companies for housing estates. The Government promised a raft of legislation involving a number of Departments to deal with this. The companies are springing up like mushrooms in a field of horses and they are abusing residents and tenants because they are not regulated. High charges and no services is the general rule. Will the Taoiseach clarify the Departments involved and when we can expect legislation?

The Taoiseach: Three or four Departments are involved — the Departments of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Environment, Heritage and Local Government and at least two others. I am not sure what the situation is but they are working on it; the Deputy should put down a parliamentary question, but we intend to bring forward legislation.

Deputy Emmet Stagg: Is there any timescale?

The Taoiseach: I do not have a timescale.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: On the list of promised legislation, the sale of alcohol Bill is listed under the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

5 o'clock However, as recent reports have indicated, the issue of alcohol is primarily one of health. All Members are mindful of the very dangerous and negative impact it is having, particularly on young people at present. Can the Taoiseach advise whether the Department of Health and Children has a direct or a consultative role in respect of the preparation of the sale of alcohol Bill and whether, given the growing societal concern about the sale of, and access to, alcohol products, particularly by young people and without the necessary controls, that legislation will be brought forward and addressed within the current session? Will the Taoiseach advise whether that is possible?

The Taoiseach: While I have answered this a number of times, the Minister has received the first report from the monitoring group established to oversee adherence on the voluntary codes. Discussions are taking place between a number of Ministers and Ministers of State to consider whether the legislation should be reactivated. No conclusion has yet been reached in this regard but the matter, based on the report, is being discussed.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Bruton.

Deputy Richard Bruton: I beg the Ceann Comhairle's pardon. I thought he had failed to notice me.

An Ceann Comhairle: I do not miss that much.

Deputy Richard Bruton: The Ceann Comhairle certainly does not. I tabled a parliamentary question to ascertain the cost of the programme for Government because, naturally, if Members are preparing for the budget——

An Ceann Comhairle: Tabling a question was the correct way to proceed.

Deputy Richard Bruton: Yes, but the reply refused to provide information on costings. It has long been the traditions of this House that all parties provide costings and proposals. Why should the costings for the programme for Government be denied to this House?

Deputy Brian Hayes: Hear, hear.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: It is a major document.

Deputy Richard Bruton: It is a very important document, which sets the framework for the coming years. As Members perform their financial planning and as we approach the budget on 5 December, they should have access to that information. I seek the Ceann Comhairle's assistance, if not that of the Taoiseach, to ensure the House receives such information.

Deputy Brian Hayes: Hear, hear.

An Ceann Comhairle: I cannot oblige the Taoiseach or any Minister to issue a reply.

Deputy Richard Bruton: The Taoiseach could comment on it. I understand the Taoiseach is in favour of transparency in respect of financial issues. Where is the Taoiseach when Members need to hear him?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Taoiseach, in respect of the budget.

The Taoiseach: It is on 6 December.

Deputy Richard Bruton: As the Taoiseach knows, that is not the question. The question is why is he refusing to provide Members with the information——

An Ceann Comhairle: It is not in order now.

Deputy Richard Bruton: ——about the cost of proposals that are outlined in the programme for Government.

The Taoiseach: I am not.

Deputy Richard Bruton: He is, as is his Government.

An Ceann Comhairle: It is not in order now.

Deputy Richard Bruton: I cannot think of an occasion when it would be in order. This is the

only time when the Leader of the Government is present in the Chamber——

An Ceann Comhairle: It is not in order. The Deputy must find a different way of raising that matter. I call Deputy Bannion.

Deputy Richard Bruton: ——to answer questions. Members know the response of the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Bannion. As Deputy Bruton knows well, it is not in order.

Deputy James Bannion: Given the incidence of bird flu in Norfolk that follows the outbreaks of foot and mouth and bluetongue in the UK, will the animal health Bill be brought forward as a matter of urgency? When can Members expect this Bill to appear before the House?

The Taoiseach: It will be introduced toward the middle of next year.

Deputy Seymour Crawford: I wish to follow up on an issue that already has been raised. A Bill pertaining to the advertising of alcohol appeared before the House and was subsequently withdrawn. Will it be reintroduced? It differs somewhat from the sale of alcohol Bill and pertains to the promotion of alcohol to young people. It should be dealt with in light of the present position in which Ireland is the second highest consumer of alcohol in the European Union.

Second, in light of the fact that Kerry Radio, which now owns Northern Sounds and Shannonside, has withdrawn news programmes from air, when will the broadcasting Bill be introduced to this House in order that Members at least can discuss openly what constitutes its remit?

The Taoiseach: The broadcasting Bill is due this session. As for the alcohol Bill, the reply is the same as that which I gave previously.

Deputy Jan O'Sullivan: What progress has been made on the nurses and midwives Bill? Have its heads been agreed and when does the Taoiseach expect it to be published?

The Taoiseach: The legislation is due next year.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Olivia Mitchell.

Deputy Jan O'Sullivan: Are the heads agreed?

The Taoiseach: No, the public consultation process is still under way.

Deputy Olivia Mitchell: Almost eight years have passed since Members were promised a Dublin transportation authority. Again this week, one sees Dubliners being subjected to the miser-

[Deputy Olivia Mitchell.]

ies of a strike by the monopoly bus provider. When will the legislation come before the House? Will it, as promised, provide for the introduction of competition in the bus market?

The Taoiseach: This session.

Deputy Olivia Mitchell: Will it do as promised, namely, bring in competition?

The Taoiseach: I cannot deal with that issue.

Deputy Olivia Mitchell: It is said the Taoiseach will make that decision.

An Ceann Comhairle: He cannot give the detail. I call Deputy Tuffy.

The Taoiseach: I will not.

Deputy Joanna Tuffy: A couple of weeks ago, I raised with the Taoiseach the need for the Government to ratify the Aarhus Convention. At the time he stated that he would direct the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to reply to me, but it does not appear to have done so. What is the up-to-date position in respect of the Aarhus Convention? When will the Government ratify it? Ireland is the only EU member state that has not ratified it as of January 2007. It would ensure the rights of the public to information, participation and access to justice in respect of environmental matters.

The Taoiseach: The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Deputy Gormley, assures me that he replied. However, as a breakdown in communication may have occurred, we will check and secure a copy of the reply for the Deputy.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I wish to raise two issues. The first arises from the point made by Deputy Richard Bruton in respect of replies to parliamentary questions. As the Members' custodian in the House, the Ceann Comhairle will be greatly concerned about this issue. There is a growing tendency in Departments to provide Members with replies to the effect that the relevant Minister has no responsibility to the House. Like the Taoiseach, me, and a number of others, the Ceann Comhairle has been a Member for a number of years. A Minister is responsible to the House for every penny that is spent by his or her Department. This should be borne in mind because any attempt to close down the avenue of replies to questions of the Opposition is a serious matter.

Second, given the recently expressed concerns about a possible intervention in the formation of a panel for an RTE discussion, is it intended to bring forward the broadcasting Bill to address the issues? If not, have discussions taken place with

the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland in the interim?

An Ceann Comhairle: The only issue in order concerns the broadcasting Bill.

The Taoiseach: As I noted earlier, it will be taken this session.

Deputy James Reilly: Notwithstanding the disappointing results of the HIQA independent assessment of hospital hygiene and its close resemblance to the original results of the first HSE assessment, when is the forthcoming nursing home legislation due for publication? Will it include provision for an independent inspectorate of public and private nursing homes?

An Ceann Comhairle: That matter cannot be discussed. The Taoiseach, on the nursing home support scheme Bill.

The Taoiseach: I understand it is planned to have it enacted by Christmas.

Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2006: Referral to Select Committee.

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Tom Kitt): I move:

That the Order of the Dáil of 26th June 2007, to the extent that it orders that the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2006 be considered in Committee of the whole Dáil, be discharged and that the Bill be referred to the Select Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights, pursuant to Standing Order 122(1) and paragraph (1)(a)(i) of the Committee's Orders of Reference.

Question put and agreed to.

Criminal Justice (Mutual Assistance) Bill 2005 [Seanad]: Referral to Select Committee.

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Tom Kitt): I move:

That the Order of the Dáil of 26th June 2007, to the extent that it orders that the Criminal Justice (Mutual Assistance) Bill 2005 [Seanad] be considered in Committee of the whole Dáil, be discharged and that the Bill be referred to the Select Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights, pursuant to Standing Order 122(1) and paragraph (1)(a)(i) of the Committee's Orders of Reference.

Question put and agreed to.

Nuclear Test Ban Bill 2006: Referral to Select Committee.

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Tom Kitt): I move:

That the Order of the Dáil of 26th June 2007, to the extent that it orders that the Nuclear Test Ban Bill 2006 be considered in Committee of the whole Dáil, be discharged and that the Bill be referred to the Select Committee on the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, pursuant to Standing Order 122(1) and paragraph (1)(a)(i) of the Committee's Orders of Reference.

Question put and agreed to.

Control of Exports Bill 2007 [Seanad]: Referral to Select Committee.

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Tom Kitt): I move:

That the Order of the Dáil of 4th October 2007, to the extent that it orders that the Control of Exports Bill 2007 [Seanad] be considered in Committee of the whole Dáil, be discharged and that the Bill be referred to the Select Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment, pursuant to Standing Order 122(1) and paragraph (1)(a)(i) of the Committee's Orders of Reference.

Question put and agreed to.

Passports Bill 2007: Referral to Select Committee.

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Tom Kitt): I move:

That the Order of the Dáil of 18th October 2007, to the extent that it orders that the Passports Bill 2007 be considered in Committee of the whole Dáil, be discharged and that the Bill be referred to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, pursuant to Standing Order 122(1) and paragraph (1)(a)(i) of the Committee's Orders of Reference.

Question put and agreed to.

Local Government (Roads Functions) Bill 2007: Order for Second Stage.

Bill entitled an Act to provide for and to facilitate the transfer of certain functions from the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to the Minister for Transport in respect of roads, to provide for the payment of moneys out of the local government fund to the Minister for Transport in respect of certain matters and to provide for related matters.

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I move: "That Second Stage be taken now."

Question put and agreed to.

Local Government (Roads Functions) Bill 2007: Second Stage.

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I move: "That the Bill be now read a Second Time."

I am pleased to open the debate in this House on the Local Government (Roads Functions) Bill 2007. On the formation of the Government in June 2007, the Taoiseach announced that responsibility for non-national roads and the national vehicle driver file, NVDF, was to be transferred from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to the Department of Transport. This Bill provides the necessary legislative framework to facilitate the transfer of responsibility for these functions from my Department to the Department of Transport.

Following the Taoiseach's announcement, my Department engaged with the Department of Transport and the Office of the Attorney General to work out the legal and practical arrangements for the transfer. Advice from the Attorney General's office was that the transfer of functions relating to both non-national roads and the NVDF required some minor amendment of the primary legislation in addition to the making of a transfer of functions order under the Ministers and Secretaries Act 1939.

The drafting of the necessary transfer of functions order is well advanced with the intention of making the order to coincide with enactment of the Bill. The Bill is technical in nature. In summary, it provides for amendment of the Local Government Act 1998 to allow for payments from the local government fund to the Minister for Transport in respect of, first, non-national roads and, second, the Minister's expenses in maintaining NVDF records, administering motor vehicle tax and issuing driver licences. The Bill also provides a statutory basis for the Minister for Transport to make regulations in respect of the NVDF functions being transferred to him. The Bill also vests in the Minister for Transport all ministerial consent provisions in respect of railway orders where the works involved are likely to affect public roads.

I wish to explain the necessity for the Bill to be enacted within a short time frame. The Department of Finance has notified a deadline of mid to late November for enactment of the Bill to allow that Department the time necessary to make budgetary adjustments consequent on the transfer of functions in the 2007 and 2008 Votes of my Department and the Department of Transport. The enactment of this Bill and the making of the transfer of functions order will allow spending provisions for non-national roads and the NVDF to be definitively transferred to the Vote of the Department of Transport. In this way, statutory responsibility for these expenditure provisions will transfer to the Department of Transport. In due course, expenditure Estimates

[Deputy John Gormley.]

to be presented to the House will reflect these changes. I thank Deputies for their co-operation in facilitating early consideration of this Bill.

Following the general election in 2002, most of the departmental administration and ministerial functions in the areas of roads, road traffic and road safety were transferred from the then Department of the Environment and Local Government to the then Department of Public Enterprise, now the Department of Transport. At that time, it was decided that functions relating to regional and local roads should remain with the Department of the Environment and Local Government. The primary reason for this was that State grants for non-national roads were mainly financed from the local government fund, which is administered by my Department. The Government has decided that overall responsibility for the non-national roads investment programme should be vested in the Minister with responsibility for overall transport development. There is no longer any rationale for having two separate Ministers and Departments with responsibility for different aspects of the public road network.

One of the primary purposes of this Bill is to facilitate the transfer of the non-national roads function to the Minister for Transport and also the payment of associated State grants by that Minister. In the matter of funding for the non-national roads investment programme, I assure the House there will be no negative impact as a result of the new arrangements. While responsibility for non-national roads is being transferred to the Department of Transport, the local government fund will continue to provide significant finance for these roads. This year alone, in addition to €87.5 million from the Exchequer, €520 million is being provided from the local government fund. This will be the benchmark for the future.

The NVDF is a database of national strategic importance which contains details of all the 2.4 million registered vehicles and 2.5 million licensed drivers in the country. The NVDF is the product of a major computerisation project which was completed in my Department in 2002. The system enables all vehicle and driving licence transaction processing to be updated in real time. The NVDF is critical to the management of the national motor tax and driver licence services, including the optimisation of these services for the motoring public. NVDF data now plays a key role in vehicle and driver regulation and in supporting the critical road safety agenda and it is in these contexts that the Government deemed it appropriate that the system and its support staff should transfer from my Department to the Department of Transport.

The primary purpose of section 1 is to amend the Local Government Act 1998 to allow for the payment of moneys from the local government fund to the Minister for Transport in respect of non-national roads and that Minister's expenses

in maintaining NVDF records, administering motor vehicle tax and issuing driver licences. These expenses are currently being met from the fund and this will continue after the transfer of functions to the Minister for Transport. Section 1 also ensures that moneys received by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Minister for Transport in the context of the motor tax and NVDF functions continue to be paid into the local government fund.

Deputies will be aware of the important role the local government fund has played in the financing of local government since it was established in 1999. The fund is financed from a combination of an Exchequer contribution — €537 million in 2007 — and the full proceeds of motor taxation, projected at €944 million for this year. The general purpose grant allocation to local authorities from the fund for 2007 amounts to €948 million. This represents an increase of 8% over the record amount provided in 2006 and is an increase of some 180% over the 1997 allocation.

It is critically important that the improvements that have been brought about in the financing of local authorities, current and capital, are built upon. In this context, it is essential the local government fund, which has been pivotal in this success, is in no way compromised by the transfer of functions. I assure the House that this will be the case. As heretofore, motor tax and the Exchequer will continue to provide resources to the fund, which will continue to provide a robust, buoyant and dedicated source of funding for local authorities by way of general purpose grants and non-national roads grants.

Section 2 contains amendments to the Roads Act 1920 which are required to facilitate the transfer of responsibility for the NVDF to the Minister for Transport. Under current legislation, the power to make regulations for the control and regulation of the motor tax system, which includes change of vehicle ownership, is vested in the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government under the 1920 Act. Notifications of vehicle ownership changes are an essential part of the maintenance and updating of the national vehicle file. With the transfer of responsibility for the NVDF to the Minister for Transport, it is necessary also to transfer responsibility for making regulations in the area of vehicle ownership records and related matters. The purpose of section 2 is to amend the Roads Act 1920 accordingly. The opportunity is also taken in this section to update definitions in section 17 of the 1920 Act.

Arising from the transfer of functions in the area of non-national roads, I will no longer have a function in respect of public roads. Section 3 makes a minor amendment to the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001 to provide that ministerial consent to the granting of a railway order, where the works in question would affect

non-national roads, is to be vested in the Minister for Transport as the responsible Minister.

I reiterate that this Bill is technical in nature and simply provides the necessary legislative framework to facilitate the transfer of the non-national roads and NVDF functions to the Minister for Transport. The actual transfer of functions will be effected by a transfer order to be made by the Government. Drafting of the necessary transfer of functions order is well advanced and the transfer order will be made to coincide with enactment of this Bill. I commend the Bill to the House.

Deputy Phil Hogan: I do not agree with the Minister that the Bill is technical in nature. It transfers a considerable amount of financial autonomy from the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to another Minister. In view of the size of the local government fund and the NVDF responsibilities, the Minister is effectively giving these away under an agreement made in the programme for Government that the non-national roads budget, consisting of the local government fund and Exchequer grants, will now be the responsibility of the Department of Transport. This does not give me great confidence about the implementation of the road works programme in view of the fact that the Minister for Transport, Deputy Dempsey, will be in charge of it. The Bill is certainly more technical than it looks. The recent mess made by the Minister, Deputy Dempsey, in the area of provisional licences and the road safety programme does not inspire confidence in his ability to clear up the enormous number of anomalies in the NVDF system. Thus, I regard this as much more than a technical Bill.

In view of the amount of money he is giving away to another Department, I am disappointed that the Minister did not take the opportunity in his contribution to say a few words about local government. It was a missed opportunity, although that is a political cliché, to enact meaningful legislation which devolves functions to local government rather than discuss one item before the House which the Minister regards as technical in the context of non-national roads. The Bill gives us an opportunity to talk about how local government works at present. It says something about the Government's direction on devolution that these road network functions are being transferred to a Department that administers the budget of the NRA. It was a mistake for the Green Party and for the Minister to allow this happen. I do not accept that the National Roads Authority will be as sympathetic to the pleadings of local government as is the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. When the National Roads Authority is not accountable to this House in terms of even asking a parliamentary question about funding for various road projects, it shows how frustrating it will be, not only for Members of Parliament but for

members of local authorities, trying to get straight answers to straight questions on a regular basis from the Department of Transport. There has been a tradition, not without good reason, that the local councillors in city and urban areas, or in county councils around the country, are able to write to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to ask that various water, sewerage or roads projects be undertaken. These were the main infrastructural projects that were at the heart of local communities. The substantial amount of money the Minister has decided to hive off from local government to the Department of Transport will make such representations all the more difficult. In the absence of reform of the accountability system that is required from the Department of Transport, through the NRA, to this House and to local authorities, I have reservations about this.

Both of the measures should have been implemented at the same time, if we were to get some meaningful input with parliamentarians and councillors having an opportunity to raise important roads issues. For example, the former Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Deputy Cullen, could meet the regional authority in the south east two years ago and make announcements about additional moneys being made available for designing important regional routes which come under the remit of the Local Government Fund as well as in the context of non-national roads. That sort of engagement with the local authority system, albeit on a regional basis, was vital to ensure that local councillors were able to make the necessary improvements to the network, at regional and local levels that were important for business, for tourism and for the day to day journeys of people to and from their places of work.

There has been much talk and many reports on local government over the years but there has been very little reform. We started in a meaningful way with the Barrington report in 1991, in which various structures were proposed to organise the local government system. Some of those proposals were implemented but they related mainly to geographical arrangements, such as splitting Dublin into three county areas and keeping Dublin City, and setting up the city structures with more meaningful boundaries. There followed the "Better Local Government" system, which was brought before us by the former Minister, Deputy Howlin, and subsequently implemented by the former Minister, Deputy Dempsey. This involved setting up a system of local government that would give community groups much more meaningful input into activities at local level.

There is no point in having those structures when we are effectively taking away from the Department a funding mechanism for non-national and regional roads and giving it to another Department. The direct line of communication is now cut off. Notwithstanding the press-

[Deputy Phil Hogan.]

ures the Minister is under from the Department of Finance to have this put through for budgetary and estimate reasons, I ask the Minister to tell us on the conclusion of Second Stage or on Committee Stage whether there will be reform of the National Roads Authority in terms of how it engages with parliamentarians and councils and whether we will have access to its staff as regards their additional, as well as existing, funding for national routes, and the principles which will govern them. Local Government has stood the test of time. It is more than 100 years old. It is the form of government nearest to the citizen. I have reservations about giving away that amount of money to another Department from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

The Minister made a statement over the weekend that he would increase motor vehicle taxation in the context of the budgetary framework on the basis that it would be good for the environment. He suggested it would be based on the engine capacity of the vehicle rather than on emissions of the vehicle. If he is interested in environment issues, as I know he is, I would have thought that he would have taken the opportunity to speak about a form of taxation in the context of reforming the VRT system to ensure that people are penalised for higher emissions rather than for higher engine capacity. That is a form of indirect taxation. The Minister is taking the opportunity to gather in more money for the Exchequer when there is a declining amount of income, and here he will give it to the Department of Transport.

Deputy John Gormley: Not all of it.

Deputy Phil Hogan: He has given it away. In one fell swoop he is speaking about passing on the Local Government Fund through the transfer of functions from his Department to the Department of Transport. The motor tax system is the best means by which he will gather in the money under that fund to fund local government. Therefore, he will have no function in the spending of the money even though he has put his neck on the line over the weekend stating that he will charge more for the benefit of the Local Government Fund by increasing by an average of 10% the amount of taxation that will come in for engines with a capacity over 1.6 litres.

Deputy John Gormley: I did not mention it.

Deputy Phil Hogan: Obviously, his spindoctors mentioned it. He was reported as saying that in any case. I will be guided by what he has to say in terms of emissions.

Deputy John Gormley: I did not mention any engine size but Deputy Hogan can believe whatever he reads.

Deputy Phil Hogan: I will be glad to get the clarification in due course. I understand he must get an early hit on the budgetary framework and that was such an effort. Obviously, I suppose his press officers were busy.

Deputy John Gormley: No.

Deputy Phil Hogan: The principles that should guide local government are important. I believe strongly in the principle of subsidiarity and what the Minister is doing here is not in the best interests of subsidiarity in terms of local government. There is no reform in terms of the transfer of functions referred to in this Bill and an opportunity should have been taken to include greater devolution of function.

Wherever a public service is provided to a defined catchment area there should be a representative body elected by the people to act as the governing body for that expenditure. The citizens, through their elected representatives, should control and fund the services locally that are provided for them, and the people, through an adequately funded and functioning local government system, should be sovereign. The Minister is seeking in this Bill to take away a significant portion of that funding.

Many quangos established some years ago to draw down local government funding through the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund are no longer required. Partnership and other groups that were established to draw down that funding are not accountable to the local government system. All of the funding drawn down by a community, an area based partnership, a Leader programme or any such programme should be accounted for in the local government system and I would ask the Minister to look at those functions in the context of whatever review of local government he will undertake in the future. When he is giving away so much money, he is obviously not in any hurry with such a review. Certainly, he should consider that all of the opportunities of groups and organisations to draw down funding in a geographical catchment area should be accounted for, through the local government system and the elected representatives, to the people. That is the principle he should adopt.

The Minister may recall the devolution commission set up in 1996 that considered various functions that could be transferred to the local government system. Nothing has happened since then. This is typical of the usual lip service we hear about introducing more devolution to local government but where the Minister of the day does not walk the walk in terms of that policy. I refer to the administration of various tourism and educational facilities, proper planning and development for health and educational services and industrial development. All of these areas should be devolved more at a local level.

The Leas-Cheann Comhairle will remember the county development boards were set up for the purpose of co-ordinating funding from various State agencies and Departments. However well the theory sounded, it was never put into practice in the local government system. We are long enough around to know FÁS will not transfer part of its budget to a local authority for the purpose of implementing a community employment programme. We also know the rural assistance budget of the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Deputy Ó Cuív, will not be transferred for the purpose of allowing a local authority to implement a programme that will assist rural communities to develop community activities. Likewise, while the school building programme is co-ordinated at national level by the Department of Education and Science, there will not be any input by local authorities in regard to site provision. The town of Callan, County Kilkenny, is seeking a health centre but the HSE will not transfer any of its functions to the local authority to ensure it has the appropriate site location to provide this essential medical facility for the community. If we are serious about proper and accountable local government, these are the types of measures that should be examined in terms of devolving to local authorities some of the remits that are currently the responsibility of a variety of Departments.

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is seeking to transfer an amount of money from his Department to another Department without a “yea” or “nay”. This is a capitulation by the Green Party to its Fianna Fáil colleagues in terms of local government funding. It is a disgrace to give that money to a Minister like Deputy Dempsey, who has demonstrated so much incompetence in his time in the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. He compounded this by his efforts in the Department of Transport where he could not even get a road safety strategy right. It is politically irresponsible of the Minister, Deputy Gormley, to even contemplate giving anything to his colleague, the Minister, Deputy Dempsey, notwithstanding the personal friendship he may have developed with him.

The transfer of funds might appear to be a necessary technical matter to comply with a discussion that took place some months ago in a smoke-filled room in which the programme for Government was concocted.

Deputy John Gormley: Smoking was not allowed.

Deputy Phil Hogan: The rooms were filled with smoke in terms of the discussions that took place on this measure. In effect, the Minister is transferring a funding source from the Department. This shows political naivety and weakness. The Minister will not be able to implement some of the key measures required in the area of local

government policy that require finance to back them up. One cannot implement much change in local government without the money to do it. Perhaps the Minister, Deputy Gormley, will let us know whether he has in mind the imposition of additional charges or other sources of funding for local government in the future. Given the proposed transfer of funding to the Department of Transport, he certainly will not have access to a vital source of funding.

I look forward to hearing what the Minister will say regarding future accessibility of local government to the National Roads Authority. Has this issue been discussed and thought through? Is there reference in the small print to the Government's policy position on this matter? I hope the Minister will return to the House at the earliest opportunity, not with an innocuous technical Bill like the proposed transfer of functions to the Department of Transport, but with a meaningful package of measures for local government reform.

Deputy Ciarán Lynch: I wish to share time with Deputy Tuffy.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Ciarán Lynch: It is always a strange day when one witnesses the transfer of powers from one Department to another. One must always ask what is the rationale underpinning the change. The obvious reason for such a move is the creation of greater efficiency, reductions in cost or a benefit in terms of a better standard of service to citizens and local authorities. In most cases, the change is for the better. However, what we have seen recently, especially in the provisional drivers debacle, is a case of good ideas that are poorly implemented and delivered.

I have several concerns with the proposal in hand, not so much in what it sets out to achieve but in how it will be rolled out. Take the example of roads in my constituency of Cork South-Central, which reflects other constituencies around the country. Housing estate after housing estate has been built on non-national roads and, in many cases, boreens. This practice has been going on for decades. When people come out of housing estates that have been built in the past 18 months to three years, they drive on new roads that may have been taken in charge by the local authority that will accommodate cars on both sides yet when they exit the estate they are on a breen. I hope the Bill will create some movement in this regard. In 2009 the local area plans and county and city development plans will be examined on the basis of commercial, residential and community development.

The question is whether moving this responsibility to the Department of Transport will create a more efficient planning model or further exacerbate the disjointed planning we have had

[Deputy Ciarán Lynch.]

to date, namely, the building of housing estates on country laneways. Quality bus corridors and park and ride facilities do not fit into this type of planning. The Department of Transport appears to be growing by the day, and problems are increasing by the day in terms of the provisional licences and the Shannon debacles. Does it need additional areas to come under its remit to be mismanaged? It is unfortunate the Minister for Transport, Deputy Dempsey, is not present as the transfer of funding is a matter for his Department and he should be present to answer questions.

What is the status of the transfer of the proceeds from the collection of motor vehicle tax from local authorities to the Minister for Transport? Likewise, what is the position regarding the collection of fees for driving licences which has been carried out by local authorities? Will the Minister for Transport take responsibility for the planning of what have become suburban roadways because housing estates have been built along them? Where do they fit into the greater scheme of things? It is necessary to clarify whether these roadways will be considered to be in suburban areas or if they will be classed as non-national roads. Where will the responsibility lie in regard to the expenditure of funds for the maintenance of these roads? Will local authorities who had responsibility for the planning of these roads, and who had accounted for them in their budgets, have to look for sanction from the Department of Transport? Who will set the priority and be responsible for the planning and layout of roads? I refer in particular to county and city development plans that are coming up for appraisal.

In recent years we have witnessed significant congestion resulting from poor planning with regard to road services. I remember when Transport 21 was announced; it was about 6.10 p.m. on a Monday. This may not be the most appropriate thing to say but occasionally I fall asleep during the "Six-one" news. Perhaps we all do that, although I should not say that as a public representative. I was not sure whether I had woken up or was having a nightmare when I saw the then Minister, Deputy Martin Cullen, talking about €36 billion.

Deputy Tom Hayes: It was a nightmare.

Deputy Ciarán Lynch: Something like that would frighten the life out of anyone. The Minister, Deputy Cullen, who had the e-voting debacle under his belt along with another, was being awarded €36 billion of lolly. What happened to that money and where does this plan fit in to Transport 21, or catch 21 as it is turning out to be? In my part of the country the Cork commuter rail service to Midleton has been pushed back to 2009. The flyovers at the Sarsfield Road and Bishopstown roundabouts appear to have disappeared off the map. The local auth-

orities have been given permission to survey the area but there does not appear to be any level of joined up thinking. If one was building a house in the manner in which we do road development here we would get a loan from the credit union for the back door, get another loan some weeks later for some blocks and another one later on for cement. There does not appear to be any overall project management plan, and the Kinsale Road roundabout is a case in point. That project worked successfully but it is now hampered because the continuation projects are not in place. Where is the joined up thinking in this transfer of functions for road works to the Department of Transport?

On another matter, the park and ride issue requires local authorities and Bus Éireann to work out plans. Does that now become an issue for the Department of Transport also? I am not sure whether this transfer of functions should be viewed as a capitulation by the Minister's Department but an empire appears to be growing in the Department of Transport which is worrying and undermines to some extent the idea of subsidiarity and local government.

The purpose of the Bill, to which the Labour Party will table some minor amendments on Committee Stage, is something that affects people on a day to day basis. When people who work hard all week come out at 7 o'clock in the morning to face a day's work and drop their children to school or child care, they need some sort of infrastructural development around their community. They do not want to travel on boreens and roadways that are out of date, so to speak. Improvement in these roadways has not been delivered to date. The Transport 21 concept now appears to be pie in the sky.

I hope that as a result of this Bill, and I am not sure if it will happen, the National Roads Authority, the Minister for Transport, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and local authorities will operate in a joined up fashion in terms of developments and that the roadways in those developments will add to the quality of people's lives. If that is to be an objective of the Bill, the Minister will have the support of the Labour Party but at this stage there are many doubts undermining it which we will address when we examine the Bill in detail.

Deputy Joanna Tuffy: I want to raise a number of issues with the Minister about the rationale for this legislation. There are implications for the transferring of this function to the Department of Transport but can the Department of Transport deal with these additional responsibilities? The Department of Transport has become a vast empire. A number of issues that have arisen there, for example, the disastrous privatisation of Aer Lingus and the implications for Shannon Airport and the whole region; the learner drivers fiasco; and the apparent inability of the Department to deliver on most of the Transport 21 projects.

With all that taking place, will the Department be capable of delivering any additional projects and functions on time and within budget?

There is a history of transfer of functions into and out of the Department of Transport which has not been successful and would not inspire confidence in the ability of the Minister and his Department to successfully realise these additional functions. For example, during the previous Dáil, responsibility for ports and marine transport was transferred from the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources to the Department of Transport yet it appeared to fall into a black hole, so to speak, in that Department where it was not given adequate attention or resources. Will that happen to the roads functions now being transferred?

Deputy Lynch expressed concerns about the type of accountability that will arise regarding the building of these roads. Who will be accountable if there are problems with them? The Minister might clarify that because he did not refer to it in his contribution. Where will the accountability arise if there are legal actions regarding issues that arise out of the maintenance or building of these roads in future? Who will be the defendant in such actions? Will the Minister clarify that?

The Minister mentioned funding of roads building with the new transfer function and said that this year, in addition to the €87.5 million, there would be money from the local government fund. He went on to say that this will be the benchmark going forward. Are the Green Party Members getting into corporate speak now, which is difficult to decipher? I want the use of the term "going forward" to be banned and the Minister should start with that.

Deputy John Gormley: I might implement that policy.

Deputy Ciarán Lynch: Put it in the dustbin and not the recycling bin.

Deputy Joanna Tuffy: What does "this will be the benchmark going forward" mean? Does it mean there will be €87.5 million in the budget this year in addition to whatever would take into account the adjustment for the new economic situation? Will that €87.5 million from the Exchequer plus the local government funding be in the budget this year? I would like the Minister to clarify that.

A few weeks ago there was a lengthy debate on road safety where a number of Deputies from throughout the country described in detail the dangerous nature of many of our non-national roads, especially in the west and north-west. When the issue was raised the Minister, Deputy Noel Dempsey, gave a commitment during that debate to drastically increase road safety measures but if there is not, at the very least, matched funding in this year's budget for building of non-national roads, that would go against the

Minister's commitment, which would be unacceptable. I would like the Minister to clarify the position.

It should be pointed out that there are no provisions under Transport 21 for the maintenance and upgrading of non-national primary roads. With the transfer of functions will that be given priority in terms of our traffic and transport commitments?

Throughout the country motorists can drive along a major inter-urban route which has been upgraded to a very high standard but when they come on to a non-national road they are often faced with poorly maintained and dangerous stretches of road on which they must complete their journey. Will the Minister give that issue priority with the transfer of the functions to the Department of Transport?

On the national vehicle and driver file, there were disturbing reports in the media recently about the impact of uninsured drivers on road deaths and road safety. Recently, *The Irish Times* reported that 1,351 vehicles recorded as written off on the national vehicle driver file were back on Irish roads. Has the Department of Transport-led investigation into this matter been concluded and what recommendations were made?

What plans are there to reform the NVDF to take recent events into account? Is the Minister considering the Motor Insurance Bureau's recommendation that the Road Safety Authority take charge of the file? The automobile authority has called on the Government to introduce a new non-national driver file to maintain a record of penalty points for those producing foreign licences following motoring offences in Ireland. Is the Government considering this type of reform?

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: I welcome the opportunity to make a brief contribution to this important business. We should welcome the publication of the Local Government (Roads Functions) Bill 2007, the main feature of which is to provide for necessary legislative amendments of a technical nature to facilitate the transfer of non-national roads and the NVDF to the remit of the Minister for Transport. The Bill is required to give effect to the Taoiseach's announcement on the formation of the Government in June, which seems a long time ago, that responsibility for non-national roads and the NVDF was to be transferred from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

My colleagues have referred to the transfer of responsibilities and devolution. Due to my background, I am always keen to support devolution. In 1994 when the Leas-Cheann Comhairle was in government, the Taoiseach of the day, Mr. John Bruton, appointed me as a member of the devolution commission. It surprised me, but I was pleased to make a contribution to the commission's work.

Deputy Denis Naughten: Even John Bruton made mistakes.

Deputy James Bannon: Even Homer nods.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: He told me that I was a good choice and I made a strong contribution, as one would expect.

Deputy Tom Hayes: I agree.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: That was the approximate time at which Deputy Naughten's party wanted me to run for it. I must have been doing something right.

Deputy Denis Naughten: We have seen sense.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: It is important to make these points. While not being critical of the Minister, there is work to be done in terms of devolution of responsibility to local authorities. The debate about too much authority and power being vested in county managers will continue for some time.

I am glad that the Minister, Deputy Gormley, is present. I applaud the work he has done since the formation of the Government and I wish him well in his role. I look forward to welcoming the Minister to Tallaght this week. Whether he will drive or cycle on Friday night, he will discover that——

Deputy John Gormley: Could I take the Luas?

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: I was going to mention it and the Minister is welcome to use it. Thank God for it. The Minister has been to Tallaght, but he will see on Friday that it is a different place from the one to which I moved years ago. It is a vibrant city in everything but name. The Minister has opinions on whether Tallaght should be a city, but he and I must agree to disagree on that fundamental point during the coming years.

Tallaght is the third largest population centre in the country. We have facilities and services in Tallaght to be expected in a major town, but I have listed them in other debates. Anyone who visits Tallaght knows it to be vibrant. While we have good roads and infrastructure and the Luas, there are gaps——

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: And a fine hospital.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: I did not want to embarrass the Leas-Cheann Comhairle. Recently, I told him that many Ministers for Health of all persuasions played roles while I campaigned for Tallaght Hospital over many years. Many stones were left sticking out of different parts of the hospital site, but the only stone to survive is the one bearing the name Brendan Howlin. It is an

interesting piece of Tallaght history. I do not need to tell the Minister how proud I am.

Deputy Denis Naughten: Solid as a rock.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: I am happy to impart these historical facts about Tallaght. It is a great place.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I am sure that, during the course of the debate, the Deputy will mention the Bill.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: I will get to it. My preamble relates to it because it is important to stress the progress made in many communities.

Deputies will mention their constituencies during the debate. They will refer to good elements, but they will also refer to challenges. Deputy Ciarán Lynch referred to boreens. While there are not many boreens in Tallaght, there are quite a few poor roads. At a time when significant progress is being made in terms of national roads, as seen by Deputies while driving around the country, there are gaps in terms of non-national roads. There is much work to be done, a point I hope the Minister will make before he passes this file to his colleague in the Department of Transport. I expect many colleagues to make this point during the debate.

I could bring the Minister around Tallaght, Firhouse, Templeogue or Greenhills. When people, even those in new communities, get up in the morning and drive to school, to the shops or about their business — sometimes, I walk to the Luas, but I drive when the weather is inclement — they face poor roads. I could bring the Minister to as many potholes in my major urban area as a Deputy could bring him to in Roscommon, Thurles, Tipperary or Cork.

Deputy Ciarán Lynch: Cork South-Central.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: It is important that we understand the challenge. If we are making progress with the national roads, there is a strong case to be made for the Department to consider a five year or ten year framework in which local authorities, particularly South Dublin County Council, could know that they will get a certain amount of money to allow them to deal with the non-national roads challenge in an effective way. This challenge includes sorting out the roads and footpaths. Last night during my constituency work in Springfield where I live, I met an 87 year old man who had fallen on a footpath. It was installed approximately 30 years ago and is in poor condition.

It is fair to make such points because major roads have been paid much attention. While driving up the Newry road for the first time in a long while to attend the recent SDLP conference, I marvelled at the progress made. However, one

can find poor roads and boreens in every constituency.

In the context of the forthcoming budget, people may state that the economy is tightening, but there has been unprecedented wealth. While local authorities have been well funded, there will always be room for more. We need to deal with the issues people want us to address in our agendas. It is true that there are non-national roads in south Dublin and Tallaght that must be dealt with quickly. It is not a matter of patchwork, which is being carried out and of which every Deputy can give examples. A more fundamental approach should be taken to this problem. County managers and councillors should know on a five year or ten year basis what amounts will be made available to get work done.

I do not want to be too parochial, but I get around my constituency as much as anyone does. One wonders what the professionals are doing. I could bring someone to Firhouse where a great deal of work has been done at the Old Mill on the Old Bawn Road and elsewhere. With all of the public money expended on that road, why will it not be turned into a larger carriageway and why will there not be further scope to get rid of traffic? Everyone who must use his or her car, whether early in the morning or late at night, knows of difficulties to be addressed. There are side issues, such as the question of why people drive their children to school 100 yards away, which occurs in every constituency.

Like other Deputies, I will not be afraid to mention the recent issues concerning driver testing. People spoke about it while I went about my business in recent weeks. In reporting this debate to the Minister for Transport, Deputy Dempsey, Deputy Gormley should mention that it is an issue and people are talking about it. In every community learner drivers face up to the new challenges, wonder how they will get their tests and wonder how effective the system will be, and it is fair to make the point. I do not say it should be easy for people to pass their tests, but they should be able to get a test. I come from a generation in which one was able to get a test easily. I did not pass the first time and that is okay. At least one was not waiting forever for a test. There are still problems with how testing is organised. In a recent Dáil debate I said a friend of mine who lives near Bray applied for a test and was sent to Naas. That makes no sense and I do not understand how professionals can make those kinds of decisions. It is fair that I mention it. Where there are difficulties with these systems we should not be afraid to say so.

I do not know whether the Leas-Cheann Comhairle will allow me to speak about the Luas extension.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Deputy O'Connor has talked about everything else.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: I have kept to the point. I listen carefully to the Opposition spokespersons and I follow their example on what one can include in the debate.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: "Roads functions" is a broad subject for a debate.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: The Minister for Transport is a busy man.

Deputy Tom Hayes: There is no doubt about that. Busy is not the word.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: He will be a busy man looking at this agenda.

Deputy Denis Naughten: He has a testing job.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: He has. I want to put pressure on him to ensure everything is done to deliver the Luas extension through the west Tallaght estates to Saggart as quickly as possible. It is relevant in discussing a Bill such as this that we be allowed to say that.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Passing reference.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: I am not afraid to stand up for my community. There is sometimes a myth that Government backbenchers are afraid to challenge Ministers. This is not true.

Deputy James Bannon: It is the Deputy's vote that counts.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: I was always happy to make the point, and I will continue to do so. Before the general election somebody told me I would make a good Opposition spokesperson. However I did not want to join the Opposition because I would have to complain about everything. I am happy to represent my community in a constructive way and try to achieve for it.

The Bill provides for an amendment of the Local Government Act 1998 to allow for payments from the local government fund to the Minister for Transport in respect of non-national roads and that Minister's expenses in maintaining the NVDF records, administering motor vehicle tax and issuing driver licences. These expenses are being met from the fund and the legislation provides for the administration of these expenses following the transfer of functions. The Bill provides a statutory basis for the Minister for Transport to make regulations on the NVDF functions being transferred to him. The Bill vests in the Minister for Transport all ministerial consent provisions in respect of railway orders where the works involved are likely to affect public roads.

Earlier I mentioned the non-national roads issue. Following the 2002 general election most of the Department administration and ministerial functions on roads, road traffic and road safety were transferred from the then Department of

[Deputy Charlie O'Connor.]

the Environment and Local Government to the then Department of Public Enterprise, now the Department of Transport. There is no longer any rationale for having two Ministers and Departments dealing with aspects of the public road network. The Government decided responsibility for the non-national road investment programme should be vested in the Minister for Transport, and the Bill provides for the administration of these expenses following the transfer of functions. It provides for a statutory basis for the Minister for Transport to make regulations on the NVDF functions being transferred to him. The Bill vests in the Minister for Transport all ministerial consent provisions in respect of railway orders where the works are likely to affect public roads.

I am not afraid to say that I have the same problems and frustrations as many Deputies in dealing with agencies where functions of the Department, particularly the Department of Transport have been hived off.

Deputy James Bannon: The Deputy and his colleagues set up the quangos.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: I did not set them up and we must deal with the existing systems. It frustrates me when I table Dáil questions and the Ceann Comhairle's office has to tell us the Minister does not have responsibility in these matters. A process must be found to deal with our concerns and issues. There have recently been issues on road development, road safety and driver testing on which it was legitimate for all of us to ask questions and try to achieve what we want because people are talking to us about it. It seems a long time since these systems were established and while some of them work, there are gaps. I share the same frustrations on trying to get information as other Members on both sides of the House. There are Ministers who try to help us and get the information to us, but sometimes it is difficult. We could talk about the HSE all day, but I do not want the Leas-Cheann Comhairle to throw me out. It comes into this discussion, but I will let it pass.

The Minister said the NVDF is a database of national strategic importance. It contains details of all 2.4 million registered vehicles and 2.5 million licensed drivers in Ireland. It is the product of a major computerisation project which was completed by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2002. The system enables all vehicle and driving licence transaction processing to be updated in real time. It is critical to the management of the national motor tax and driving licence services including the optimisation of these services to the motorist public.

I come from a different Dublin in a different generation when there was hardly a car on the street. I remember the horses on the street and the trams before the tracks were pulled up. Now

everybody has a car. When I first moved to Tallaght hardly anybody had a car, and I did not have one. Now every house has three or four cars and that adds to the challenge. Anybody who tries to drive in the morning or evening knows the difficulties this entails.

The data in the NVDF plays a key role in vehicle and driver regulation and supporting the critical road safety agenda. In this context the Government deemed it appropriate that the system and its support staff transfer from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to the Department of Transport. This Bill is necessary to give effect to the transfer of functions relating to non-national roads and the NVDF to the Department of Transport. The Government will make a transfer order to coincide with the enactment of the Bill. I am glad this Bill is being supported on the Government benches, and if I have listened carefully to most of the speeches from the Opposition there is a measure of support there and that is fair.

Deputy Tom Hayes: Deputy O'Connor was not listening carefully.

Deputy Charlie O'Connor: In any debate we are entitled to make the points we want to make and I look forward to all of us doing that. I thank the Leas-Cheann Comhairle for his courtesy in allowing me to mention some of the matters I raised. I am looking forward to further debate and I will certainly be listening to colleagues from all sides. I look forward to seeing the Minister in Tallaght on Friday.

Deputy Denis Naughten: I wish to stick specifically to the Bill and deal with the provisions for the national vehicle and driver file. Data on penalty points is held on the driver file and, as it currently operates, this file is fundamentally flawed. A quarter of all drivers who qualified for penalty points could not receive them as they do not hold an Irish driving licence. We are allowing 25% of drivers who are breaching the law to get away scot free. All over the country we see lunatics overtaking on continuous white lines and travelling at the speed of light, yet many of their registration plates are Northern Irish, British or continental European. These people can come in to the jurisdiction and give two fingers to the Garda Síochána and to Irish road traffic legislation, as we have not been prepared to address the issue.

This Government has been in office for ten years and we have had ten years of road safety strategies. It promised in its original strategy that it would address this issue, but nothing has happened since. This has led to a litany of road traffic accidents, yet we are not prepared to do anything about it. This place has turned into a talking shop. The Minister for Transport will come before this House and say that we are discussing the issue with the Northern Ireland authorities, the British

authorities and at EU level. These discussions have gone on for ten years, but nothing has happened to address the problem. People are getting away with breaking the law thanks to the system that is there at the moment, yet we continue to ignore it and brush it under the carpet.

This also applies to motor insurance. There are currently 100,000 vehicles on Irish roads without any insurance. Up to end of September 2007, 6,539 people had received penalty points for driving uninsured. Given that a quarter of drivers on our roads are exempt from the laws of this country as we cannot attach penalty points to their licences, many of these uninsured will get away scot free. The failure of 100,000 people to insure their vehicles costs the rest of us an additional €45 per annum, but we could address a quarter of them if penalty points were attached to drivers from outside this jurisdiction and if there was an up to date national vehicle and driver file.

This is not the only road safety issue in which promises have been ignored. In their contributions, the Minister and Deputy O'Connor made the point that the national vehicle and driver file is critical to support the road safety agenda in this country. It should be updated and modernised, and we should be able to deal with foreign drivers in this jurisdiction.

There is also a problem with people using driving licences as a form of identification for other breaches of the law. A five year old could forge our driving licences. I could get a forged Irish driving licence in the morning for €10. It is farcical to think that there is any security involved in it. All drivers are now required by law to carry their licences, a piece of paper that crumples easily. In 2003, the then Minister for Transport, Deputy Brennan, promised us that a credit card sized driving licence would be in place by 2004. The Minister said at the time that he was determined to have it in place by then. When I contacted the Road Safety Authority on this issue last week, I was told that the new directive means that it is not required to be in place until 2013, and that it is the objective to have it in place by 2012. We were promised this in 2004, but we will have to wait eight years before it is in place. In the meantime, that form of identification is an insult to anybody's intelligence. It is being blatantly flouted and those people on false licences cannot be given penalty points. The whole system is a farce.

Law abiding citizens in this country can be one or two miles per hour over the speed limit at the edge of a town, yet they receive penalty points from a garda taking the soft option. The people who give two fingers to the law do not receive points, which is something we cannot continue to ignore.

I would like to make a final point about the notification of change of ownership and vehicles that have been written off. More than 1,000 vehicles in the State have been written off, but

are put back on the road. This cannot be ignored and is causing huge road safety problems.

Deputy James Bannon: I would like to support Deputy Hogan's stance on this Bill. In seeking to rush it through the Houses, the Government is once again shelving responsibility and enforcing the "Dublin knows best" mentality at the expense of the autonomy of local authorities. The main purpose of the Local Government (Roads Functions) Bill 2007 is to make legislative changes that are required to enable the transfer of responsibility for non-national roads and the national vehicle and driver file to the Department of Transport. One could of course point out that it is rare for this Government to take responsibility for anything. It is interesting though that the Minister is finally embracing transparency and admitting that his Department has made a total mess of roads infrastructure, especially on our rural roads.

I am all in favour of the recent spate of U-turns by this lame-duck Government and even sympathetic to the Minister's need for therapeutic confusion, but at the end of the day, local authorities are not pawns in a political game of expediency, with responsibility being shifted from one Department to another to the detriment of local autonomy. According to figures in the Government's pre-budget outlook, local authorities are facing a cut of more than 13% in funding for non-national roads, the routes which constitute 94% of the overall road network and carry 60% of all traffic. Pre-budget figures show that the budget for non-national roads will fall from €87.5 million this year to €53.8 million next year.

We are being told that the urgency of rushing through this legislation is to facilitate the Department of Finance in the necessary budgetary adjustments. Does this herald a divide and conquer approach, with cutbacks slipping in by default? Funding of €253,771 promised for Longford's rural roads was slashed in post-election cutbacks while €11,892 was taken from funding for Westmeath roads.

The Minister, hastening to appear accountable, will claim this is the responsibility of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as the moneys are allocated under the local improvement scheme as part of the CLÁR programme. I do not care which way the Minister spins it or manipulates change to his advantage. The bottom line is that our roads, in particular non-national roads, are a disgrace. Rural communities are suffering economic deprivation due to the state of our roads. Communities are being isolated by a lack of necessary infrastructure and many roads are in a deplorable condition.

I have made numerous representations for the upgrading of non-national roads in the Longford-Westmeath area, many of which are in a prehistoric condition. Continual representations to the Department have still not brought the upgrading of the roads in the midlands, essential to the

[Deputy James Bannon.]

region's economic growth. Gateway and hub towns have been created in isolation with no real effort to develop links between them.

The Bill provides for the transfer of the national vehicle driver file, NVDF, to the Department of Transport. This is to be welcomed as there has been a lack of engagement by NVDF staff under the watch of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. While any plan to deal with the inadequacies in the NVDF is a step in the right direction, the Road Safety Authority recommended a new agency be established to rectify the problems. The Oireachtas Joint Committee on Enterprise and Small Business recommended the creation of a motor vehicle agency as a partial solution to the problem of uninsured drivers.

The European Commission's motor insurance directives require the State to develop an accurate central insurance database on every vehicle in the State. This project, known as the information centre, is deficient due to problems with the NVDF. The Irish Insurance Federation has brought difficulties with the database to the attention of the Department, recommending responsibility for it be given to the Road Safety Authority.

The Garda does not have access to an accurate central database of insurance information, essential to the maintenance of roadside checkpoints. Uninsured drivers kill up to 20 people each year and leave a further 2,000 seriously injured according to the Motor Insurers Bureau of Ireland. There is evidence that a large number of owners of foreign-registered vehicles retain their domestic registration, renewing insurance in their home country. Foreign insurers refuse to pay claims on the grounds that the driver is resident in Ireland and provided incorrect residency information.

I am tired of telling the House that rushed legislation is bad legislation. Once again we are at the mercy of the Government's inefficiency and pressurised to copperfasten its expedient legislation. Local authorities are the bedrock of local democracy. As a former general secretary of the Local Authority Members Association, I know well the issues of concern to all local authorities. The whims of central Government cannot be allowed to impact adversely on the autonomy of local authorities. I will not support this Bill and will vote against it.

Deputy Tom Hayes: When I noticed the Local Government (Roads Functions) Bill on this week's schedule, I was looking forward to learning of major proposals for the future of the road network. However, when I read the technical aspects of the Bill, I was disappointed.

What is the future of the local improvement and the community involvement scheme? While these important schemes have had a large impact on many communities, their single largest prob-

lem is in securing adequate funding. When I served on south Tipperary's local authority, each year when agreeing the council's budget, our main concern was the lack of funding for roads projects. We were forced to wait each year for the Minister to announce how much would be available. The powers-that-be in any Department in Dublin do not understand the impact of the local improvement scheme on rural communities. With the forthcoming budget, will the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government make more funding available for these wonderful schemes?

As a Member I am always frustrated with replies to parliamentary questions from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. As a Member representing a rural constituency, I note that every week a matter is raised about the condition of local roads. As traffic volumes increase, it is becoming an important issue. I do not understand why a simple reply to parliamentary questions on road projects and improvements cannot be had. How the Department of Social and Family Affairs deals with parliamentary questions is an example to behold and which every other Department must follow.

I question the wisdom and logic of transferring certain powers from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to the Department of Transport as proposed in the Bill. I am concerned this will not be good for road users. People are frustrated because they are paying a large amount in road tax. Those living in rural Ireland see a large amount of tax being paid in keeping a car on the road, from when one buys a vehicle to motor tax to the petrol pump.

Recently there was debate on putting extra taxes on jeeps and SUVs because they are supposed to be fuel-guzzlers. The Minister, Deputy John Gormley, promotes this view. He should be very careful as many of these vehicles are necessary to those who are hard-pressed in rural Ireland. Before the Minister jumps to make such a decision he should tread carefully and think of the people on low incomes whose way of life has changed drastically but who need those vehicles.

Deputy Martin Mansergh: Not for the first time I have the pleasure of following my constituency colleague, Deputy Tom Hayes, and while I do not agree with everything he said I agree with much of it.

This is primarily a Bill about the organisation of Government business. There is no perfect rational way of organising sections of Departments, however they are divided there will be anomalies. In 2002 a rationale was put forward for allocating national roads to the Department of Transport and other roads to the Department for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government because local authorities have much to do with local and regional roads. They are also involved in the national roads programme, if not

to the same extent as the National Roads Authority. I accept and support the idea that one Minister be responsible for all roads because some important roads, not classified as national roads might otherwise be the responsibility of a separate Minister. Departments are shaped and reshaped partly to reflect the wishes and attributes of Ministers. I am not entirely surprised to find that the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, who is also the leader of the Green Party, is divesting himself of responsibility for roads. At best roads have a neutral, and at worst a negative, connotation for someone with an environmental, ecological outlook.

Those who live in Dublin or who, like all of us here, spend a great deal of time speeding a considerable distance down national roads, may not appreciate that people in rural constituencies primarily use local and regional roads and maybe some bit of national road close to their homes. For most of their working lives they may never go near a dual carriageway or a motorway. If one conducted a survey of the numbers using the different roads one would find that 85% of traffic, or more, is on non-national roads. These roads are important but of variable quality, some are good, while others connecting important towns leave much to be desired. The same applies to small roads, some of which are dangerous and twisting with ditches that are falling in. An announcement on the local improvements scheme is imminent and it will contain good news for west and south-west Tipperary to which I look forward.

At a meeting that I attended last night someone made the point about speed limits that there is an 80 km/h limit on good regional roads and on every other sort of local and rural road even those of poor quality. One may take the view that the Government or public authority should not have to legislate for everything or one can impute common sense to people. I had to travel up the mountains today, to pay my respects to a former councillor who lost her husband yesterday, and realise that 60 km/h is fast on some of those roads.

Too little attention is paid to the road drainage these days compared with a generation ago. Farmers do not seem to maintain their drains as they used to do, when perhaps they had more time. There may have been more personnel in local authorities who were more attentive to this work. When a rainy season begins, which may be fairly soon after the two and a half months of dry weather we have been experiencing, flooding and potholes occur rapidly. The Government and local authorities should pay more attention to improving drainage, possibly by including it in farm schemes, which would benefit farmers and their communities.

Given the volume of fast traffic nowadays there is a case to be made for extending pavements some way out of towns and villages. The only sur-

prise is that there are not more accidents involving pedestrians. Street lighting helps where there is a cluster of houses.

According to the newspapers the construction industry faces a steep decline in house building. I hope that the budget and the Estimates will provide substantial funding for the national roads programme and for local and regional roads. While we all understand the importance of the national roads to the national economy and for important centres, hubs and gateways and so on we must not lose sight of the fact that local roads, all the way down to the boreen, are important to the people who live near them.

I wish that road signs were improved. Some counties place an L sign at the end of every road, however small or minor. I discovered when a road scheme was mooted for the Tipperary bypass and part of it crossed a road close to my home that the minor road I use is a four-digit L route.

It would be helpful if this was extended to help people identify where they are going when they leave an area. Road signs could be improved and some important towns are separated by hills. The road signs between Nenagh and Tipperary are appalling and the opportunities for strangers and visitors to lose their way are infinite.

The previous speaker made a point on road tax which, like most taxes, is not a dedicated tax. On the whole, dedicated taxes are not an efficient way to run a budget; those who use our roads not only contribute to the upkeep of roads and investment in transport but also help fund our schools and hospitals. As a driver who pays his fair share of road tax, and every other tax on petrol, diesel and so, on I do not object to this. The Exchequer needs money to pay for public services and, on the whole, those who use roads are not the worst off in society — especially not those who drive large jeeps and four by fours. Deputy Hayes made a touching case for people in expensive jeeps who are deprived and for whom these vehicles are essential but I do not accept this.

We must get a little serious on carbon emissions and sometimes a little discouragement can work wonders. Take the plastic bag tax, for example. Will anyone, even a person on social welfare, be bankrupted by paying 20c for a plastic bag? Of course not, but the impact is psychological. We all waste far more than 20c on a variety of things but the psychology in this case works. A little fiscal discouragement of gas guzzlers and a lot of discouragement of the kinds of vehicles that race at high speed around our streets and country roads at night, performing figures of eight and doughnuts, and better enforcement of speeding laws would do us all a service.

I broadly welcome this Bill and believe it gives this House an opportunity to focus on the importance of local roads.

Regarding the issue of safety, our school buses travel on some quite poor roads that may be quite

[Deputy Martin Mansergh.]

hazardous. A survey this morning suggests our children have more freedom in some ways but I feel they have less freedom in other ways. Not many parents would be happy to see their children under ten years of age go on 30 mile bicycle rides around the countryside, the way they once could, when the only hazard might be a dog that could bite one's ankle. The emphasis in the survey was on security and this issue is evident in parents' concerns about the safety of their children. They have every right to be concerned, not least regarding road safety. In the past 24 hours a lorry drove up on a pavement and I was nearly knocked down by a car speeding into a parking position on a pavement. We must examine the safety dimension.

We justified a rail safety programme that took in less used railways and perhaps it is time for a road safety programme that sees investment in road infrastructure in addition to the measures for which the Road Safety Authority, under Gay Byrne, is responsible. We must remember that speed limits, alcohol testing, driving tests and so on represent only one side of the equation. Accidents happen more frequently at certain locations and this is likely to be for physical reasons. Attention must be paid to the improvement and maintenance of hazardous sections of road, even if it requires the straightening of bends or ensuring that hedges are properly cut and that the sides of roads do not slope too precipitously.

A great deal of work needs to be done in this area. I welcome the Minister to the House and stress to him that roads that are not national roads are also very important.

Deputy Joe McHugh: I wish to share time with Deputies Clune and Crawford.

I welcome the Minister to the House and concur with my colleagues on this side of the House in their scepticism. We are handing part of a Department to the Department of Transport, run by the Minister, Deputy Noel Dempsey, and this does not instil confidence regarding competence and future direction.

An array of experiences in the recent past also informs my personal scepticism. The Department of Transport has formulated great plans on paper, but, similar to Chelsea Football Club, on the field it is a different story and we need only look to Transport 21 for evidence of this. Even when Deputy Martin Cullen was Minister for Transport and I was a Member of the Seanad I asked parliamentary questions through my colleague, Deputy Dinny McGinley, regarding consultations with our colleagues across the Border seeking to bring about joined up thinking and joint strategies. This drew a blank because the harsh reality is Transport 21 is built on foundations of sand and does not go into the long-term strategic thinking needed for our roads.

There are regular announcements made regarding non-regional roads in the Border areas.

Prior to the recent general election the Taoiseach flew to Letterkenny in a helicopter to announce that there will be a motorway from Dublin to Derry. That was a beautiful announcement when his party faced losing two of three seats in Donegal north-east and unfortunately it worked because Fianna Fáil held on to two of those seats. Fortunately I squeezed in.

Deputy John Gormley: The Deputy did well.

Deputy Joe McHugh: I struggled through and this incident exemplifies the approach to joined up thinking. We are discussing non-regional roads but sharp focus is necessary when considering towns and villages such as St. Johnston, Muff and Carrigans. These rural areas suffered considerably, both economically and socially, during the 30 years of the Troubles. These are the forgotten areas that have not featured in mainstream thinking in regard to infrastructural development. We politicians tend to focus on the grandiose announcements regarding motorways and dual carriageways. I hope the Minister will look after these Border roads within the new framework. Their condition is an absolute disgrace. The EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and its successor, PEACE II, have filled a vacuum in funding in the past ten years. In terms of long-term strategic thinking, however, we cannot expect local authorities to meet the maintenance costs involved. We must adopt a strategic approach to developing these routes.

Consideration must be given to the provision of railway services in the region. Donegal County Council presented a document to the strategic committee in recent days putting forward the case for opening up a former railway route to St. Johnston from Letterkenny and through Strabane. I am disappointed that the Minister is being sidetracked from transport issues. He is generally subjected to a barrage of criticism, but I had faith in him in this regard. It was galling to hear a spokesperson for Iarnród Éireann saying on RTE Radio 1, with reference to the Sligo-Dublin route, that the number of rail passengers is continually increasing. This is something we must tap into in terms of long-term strategy.

Other types of infrastructural projects also require funding. I put a question to the Minister for Transport as to whether there will be a funding mechanism for the continuance of the ferry route from Magilligan to Greencastle in north Inishowen. The response was that the Department has no responsibility in this regard. This points once again to the lack of joined up thinking in respect of public service provision. The north west is a peripheral area and the lack of railway infrastructure means we must rely entirely on the transportation of goods by road.

There is much talk of centralised decision-making, and we must look at that as an opportunity. The National Roads Authority receives funding for the improvement and maintenance of national

primary and secondary roads. However, there has been an absolute deficit in terms of broader vision. The NRA must give up the notion that a particular road project is a stand-alone one simply because it happens to be a national primary or secondary road. Linkages can be created. Some of the finest regional roads can be as good as, if not better than, some national secondary roads.

I call for a broadening of thinking in terms of the strategic linkage between our national primary and secondary routes, on the one hand, and our non-national and regional roads, on the other. I am sceptical about the purpose of this legislation.

Deputy Deirdre Clune: As a member of the roads committee of Cork City Council since 1999, I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate. The Bill transfers an important element of the Minister's remit to the Department of Transport. Many speakers have expressed their scepticism about this initiative in view of the difficulty we encounter in obtaining information from the NRA. As Deputy McHugh observed, the national roads for which the NRA is responsible have a serious impact locally. Many people use the local sections on a daily basis in travelling to and from work or school.

The condition of roads has been high on the agenda of my local authority since I became a councillor in 1999. There are many kilometres of roads throughout the State in an unsatisfactory condition. Many of the previous speakers represent more rural areas than my own. The area I represent straddles parts of both Cork city and county, and I have seen a vast difference between the condition of the roads in both areas. Money has been invested in developing roads in the city, an investment that was long overdue. However, areas on the periphery of the city, including Grange, Rochestown and Togher, do not enjoy the funding to which they are entitled. I hope the Minister will review the request for a boundary extension to Cork city's local authority area.

Deputy John Gormley: How would people living in the county feel about that?

Deputy Deirdre Clune: The Minister should ask people in the area how they might be better served. Cork city has a low population and, in selling itself abroad, needs to improve its population base. It is a discussion for another day and a debate that is ongoing in the area. In terms of roads and services, people would be better served in coming under the remit of Cork City Council. Cork County Council is responsible for an area stretching from Allihies to the border with Waterford. In such a vast region, the areas on the periphery of the city suffer. It is probably the same in Limerick and Dublin.

The status of the quay walls in Cork city has varied from national to non-national. Meanwhile,

the walls are crumbling into the river. As a result, the marina, which is a wonderful amenity, is subsiding. The quay walls have featured on Cork City Council's roads programme for as long as I have been there but the funding is never available. Nobody wants to spend up to €15 million on a project that will not improve the appearance and condition of roads in the area. The walls have historical and heritage value for the city but will be expensive to repair. Nobody is taking responsibility and the funding programme continues to be put forward every year. We received funding for a consultant's report and that report was produced, but no funding is forthcoming to undertake the necessary work. Perhaps this project should be extracted from the city council's roads programme and included elsewhere. I do not know whether it is any longer a matter for the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government or if it should be deferred to the Department of Transport.

The area I represent includes several large housing estates, some of which are in poor condition. There is a huge demand for traffic calming measures. Speed ramps are evident in many suburban areas in Dublin, some of them attractive and others not. Local authorities can introduce a speed limit of 30 km/h in a designated area, but this must be done in conjunction with some form of traffic calming. As someone who is active locally, this has emerged as the most important issue for residents in recent years. As we have progressed with resurfacing footpaths and improving public lighting, speeding motorists has become of primary concern.

I am sure the provision of facilities for pedestrians is something close to the Minister's heart. In most housing estates and other large suburban settlements, pedestrians, both old and young, do not have priority, even though it is their own neighbourhood. The car is king. We need to step back from that and recognise that people are living in these areas who wish to walk, cycle and push buggies. Elderly people want to feel comfortable in the area. We do not have enough pedestrian crossings and footpaths in many areas are not wide enough. Speed limits are also unsuitable. On the whole, there is not enough emphasis on safety for pedestrians and giving them priority, which I would like to see make a return.

We have seen some green routes coming through the city and county area. They accommodate buses but also provide safety for pedestrians and encourage people to cycle or walk. We have seen they are very effective. Will the Acting Chairman indicate how much time I have left in my slot before I adjourn the debate?

Acting Chairman (Deputy John Cregan): The Deputy has two minutes left in her slot and there are a further six minutes left for Deputy Crawford.

Deputy Deirdre Clune: There are eight minutes in total in the slot. We will return tomorrow.

Debate adjourned.

Private Members' Business.

Child Care: Motion.

Deputy Alan Shatter: I move:

That Dáil Éireann,

calls on the Government to radically modify the new proposed child care subvention scheme that the Government intends to become fully operational from 1 July 2008, as this scheme:

- will impose intolerable financial pressures on many parents by increasing the expense of child care;
- will force some parents to leave employment and become dependent on social welfare payments;
- threatens to cause the closure of many not-for-profit crèches throughout the country;
- presently renders it impossible for such crèches to recruit new staff on a permanent basis; and
- undermines the prospects of returning to the workforce or the obtaining of essential training and education by parents presently working in the home who wish to resume employment;

and further calls on the Government to extend application of the existing subvention scheme up to 31 December 2008 to end the current uncertainty.

I wish to share time with Deputies Carey, Feighan, D'Arcy, Clune, O'Mahony, McHugh and McCormack. Perhaps the Acting Chairman will indicate when I approach 14 minutes in my contribution.

The Government has displayed stunning incompetence in announcing the new community child care subvention scheme that is to become fully operational on 1 July 2008. I acknowledge the new scheme will benefit a small percentage of community child care services, particularly in some disadvantaged areas of Dublin where a substantial portion of parents are recipients of social welfare or family income supplement. However, it will also have a profoundly detrimental impact on parents, children and the vast majority of community child care services established on a not-for-profit basis throughout the country. For children, many parents and community child care providers, implementation of the new scheme is potentially catastrophic in that it will make it financially unviable for parents to continue to use

crèche facilities, and it will force some to make a choice between continuing at work or having children.

The question must be asked if the Government is attempting to implement a surreptitious "one child per family" policy such as currently exists in China. The new child care subvention scheme could be described as State-imposed family planning by stealth. Clearly, its impact is anti-family, anti-child and anti-parent.

As an instrument of economic policy it is entirely misconceived. The continued economic success of this country and our capacity for continuing growth remains partially dependent on the net immigration of workers into this country. As we have a growing elderly and greying population, and as the imbalance widens between those in employment and those retired, it is also dependent on our birth rate naturally growing. It should be an essential social and economic objective in this State, as in other member states of the European Union, that parents be encouraged to have children rather than discouraged, and that the economic impact of rearing a young family be mitigated or relieved, not made unnecessarily burdensome.

The impact of the Minister's proposals were very starkly portrayed in a letter written to *The Irish Times* by Oonagh Montague. I wish to quote some extracts from that letter. She states:

Today the Government made the decision for me that I shall only have one child. Up until now I had been trying to hold my ground against the grinding increases in all of life's necessities. Finally, my husband and I must admit defeat. The Government has introduced the Community Child Care Subvention Scheme. This will affect the crèche our daughter attends.

She goes on:

Whatever remains after child care is needed to pay bills. We do not go on sun holidays. Our car was born in 1995. We do not go out to dinner and the cinema is a rare treat. Like many of my friends, we live a rather frugal life.

She continues:

Up to now I thought I could muddle along. Now things have changed. This morning it seems the Government has won. This is one final increase we cannot overcome. So I can only have one child. I thought this was a decision I would make for myself. I will not attempt to express how this makes me feel. Sometimes there are not words to convey how hopeless this country's voters feel.

That letter very eloquently and starkly portrays the concerns of many parents.

The current scheme originally operated under the Equal Opportunities Child Care Programme 2000-06 and was co-funded by the European Union Social Fund. Through it, targeted support

was provided through the staffing support grant scheme whereby community-based not-for-profit child-care providers were awarded grant aid towards staffing costs to allow them to charge parents limited fees for child care. This scheme, which originally was to end in 2006, was continued by the Government to the end of 2007, no doubt because 2007 was an election year. No detailed description of the newly-announced scheme was contained in any of the election manifestos of the Government parties. It was simply cynically announced a short few weeks after the formation of the present Government.

Funding under the present scheme provides universal supports for all parents who avail of not-for-profit child care services but the new scheme applies to a limited category of parents. In practice, only parents in receipt of social welfare payments or participating in community employment will benefit from an €80 weekly subvention in respect of full day care provision, and parents in receipt of family income supplement will benefit from a €30 weekly subvention in respect of such day care.

Many parents currently in employment and in receipt of modest earnings will be required to pay substantially higher weekly child care costs than those now incurred. This is because implementation of the new scheme will render it impossible for current services to continue without increasing charges to parents who do not benefit from subventions.

The announced new scheme has caused genuine alarm and stress to parents and has resulted in many genuine concerns being voiced by those involved in the provision of community child care services. These include Planet — The Partnerships Network, which is the representative voice of the 38 area-based partnerships, which work to promote social inclusion through the development of disadvantaged areas and communities. Such concerns have also been expressed by the Southside Childcare Action Network, Bawnogue Women's Development Group, St. Ronan's playgroup in Clondalkin, Catkin's nursery in Longford and others.

It is clear the scheme, if unchanged, will have the following detrimental impacts. It will impose intolerable financial pressure on many parents by dramatically increasing the expense of child care and it will force some parents to leave employment and become dependent on social welfare payments. It will undermine the prospects of returning to the workforce or the obtaining of essential training and education by parents currently working in the home who wish to resume employment. It places at risk the financial viability of many not-for-profit crèches throughout the country should it result in a reduction in the number of children availing of their services due to parents' inability to pay increased costs.

It will act as a direct disincentive to parents currently dependent on welfare obtaining further education and training so as to rejoin the work-

force, knowing that if they do so, any financial benefit gained through employment will be entirely or largely offset by increased child care crèche costs. In some areas it will place at risk the social mix of children using specific crèches and will result in the overwhelming majority of children in such crèches deriving from parents dependent on social welfare and effectively segregate these children from others whose parents are in employment and who cease availing of crèche facilities, making arrangements for their children to be looked after by family members or friends.

The announced new scheme has already had a detrimental impact in so far as it has rendered it impossible for crèches to recruit new staff on a permanent basis in circumstances in which their future funding and capacity to pay wages of any staff recruited is entirely uncertain.

The new scheme as announced in theory becomes operative on 1 January 2008 but it will not apply to community child care facilities already funded under the current scheme until 1 July 2008. Over 800 services throughout the country are currently in receipt of staffing grant support under the current scheme and transitional arrangements have been put in place to maintain the current scheme for all existing grant recipients until 1 July next.

From statements made by both the Minister for Health and Children and the Minister of State with responsibility for children, it seems the reason for this transitional period is that the Minister for Health and Children announced the new scheme without having available to her essential information as to how it would work in practice, and without her Department first undertaking the necessary research to make appropriate judgments.

No clear data was obtained or maintained as to what was the actual level of disadvantage in respect of parents and children benefiting from the current scheme, which has been in place for four years. No research was undertaken to ascertain the profile of disadvantaged parents using the service or to determine the numbers removed from social welfare dependency to employment.

Although it was a condition of funding under the original scheme that a tiered fee structure apply to enable a broad range of parents and their children benefit based on their ability to pay and to ensure a good social mix, no adequate structures were put in place to ensure implementation of such a tiered system. Neither was any advance research undertaken to determine the impact of any proposed changes to the existing scheme.

Prior to announcing the new scheme, information should have been obtained from the service providers by the Minister to establish a profile of each service currently available in terms of the type of services provided, the profile of the parents using the service for their children, the operational costs and any other relevant data indicating a special need that requires a particular

[Deputy Alan Shatter.]

approach. Instead of first obtaining the information and then announcing a new scheme, the Government announced the scheme and is now seeking the information. Not only is this an extraordinarily incompetent way in which to administer public funds, because it confirms there was no proper monitoring of expenditure on the current scheme, it is also a scandalously inept approach to the formulation of crucial social policy affecting the rights and day to day lives of parents and children.

The reality is that in today's world for most parents to keep their heads financially above water, it is essential that both mothers and fathers are in employment. The truth is that we need more, not less affordable quality child care services; we must reduce the costs for all parents who need to avail of crèche and other child care facilities; we must apply the child-centred approach promised in the Government's National Development Plan 2007-2013; and we must implement policies which strongly support parents into and in employment. We should encourage a work ethic and not force parents to become welfare dependent.

The new scheme announced by the Government fails to reflect any of these principles. We have been told in this House that when the Government completes the research that is now under way, it will consider what amendments, if any, it can make to the newly announced child care subvention scheme.

The Minister has indicated that by February or March next, he hopes to be in a position to bring proposals to Government. We do not know if he will have funding for the new proposals, the content of the proposals, how they will affect parents and children or the capacity of the current crèche providers to maintain their services. The Minister at this stage does not know what he will propose as the Department must now consider and analyse detailed information received from over 800 service providers about tens of thousands of parents.

It is not good enough that the current uncertainty should continue. The new and amended scheme the Minister is considering announcing should be first published in draft form with a report detailing the information obtained from the research undertaken and the conclusions derived from it. There should be total transparency and, following publication, there should be a three month consultation period, following which the scheme the Minister proposes to adopt should be brought before this House for debate and, if need be, amendment. In the interim, the Minister should end the current uncertainty and announce that the current scheme, which is to continue on a transitional basis until 1 July next, will be extended until 31 December 2008.

I call on all parties in this House to support the Fine Gael motion and demand that the Minister address the current uncertainty and real concerns

of parents and service providers who have contributed outstanding service to local communities in establishing not-for-profit facilities for children and who wish to ensure secure employment for their staff until at least the end of 2008 and to know where they stand. It is intolerable that the present situation should continue.

Deputy Joe Carey: I strongly support this Fine Gael Private Members' motion. It has been obvious for some time that one of the most pressing needs of today's society is to support parents as they bring up young families and attempt to balance home and work commitments. The State must ensure that the hardships currently experienced by many families across the country are eased and a genuine choice is offered to parents.

Child care costs continue to soar — they have increased by 23% in the past two years. As the cost of living increases, many families with two working parents are locked into a vicious pattern of trying to make ends meet. It is time for the Government to listen to these families and to put them first.

Deep concern has been expressed about the new proposed child care subvention scheme by parents and child care providers throughout the country. Parents are rightly worried about the increase in child care costs and not-for profit crèche providers are facing the real prospect of closure. Newly built community crèches, which promised a better future, now face the real prospect of lying idle. With this, parents in receipt of social welfare payments will have little incentive to return to work or resume education or training if the scheme goes ahead as planned.

The calls for the scheme to be altered are loud, clear and comprehensive. In my constituency, I wish to highlight in-depth research carried out by the Clare community-based not-for-profit child care providers. Their findings, which represent the views of 18 community child care providers in County Clare, confirmed that if the scheme goes ahead as announced the quality and standard of existing services will suffer and child care places will be lost. The narrow definition of "disadvantaged" as set out by the proposed scheme will have the effect of creating a new poverty trap for those who wish to take advantage of new work opportunities, pay rises, seasonal work or education and training where welfare payments are not retained. The lack of consultation with those working within the sector on a day-to-day basis, even by the Government's standards, is a mark of appalling arrogance on the part of an increasingly out of touch Administration.

I will highlight two projects in County Clare which will be adversely affected. The first project is based in an urban setting and has 78 children. Parents of 59 of these children, or two thirds of them, are in receipt of social welfare payments. The total operating cost is €420,000, with expected fees of €280,000 and a staffing grant of

€130,000, thereby leaving a €10,000 shortfall. Based on the current enrolment, the subvention allocated will be €75,000, which will lead to an annual loss of €65,000. To offset this loss, fees will have to rise by almost one third in most cases.

The second project is located in a rural area with no similar service for 20 miles. The centre caters for 83 children, who are charged €100 per week for day care and €40 for play-school. Based on the current proposals these fees will have to rise to €180 and €72 respectively, equivalent to an 80% increase. In practical terms these proposals will render this service unsustainable, resulting in a reduction in opening hours or a greatly reduced service. In such rural areas the consequences will be devastating.

I wholeheartedly support this Fine Gael Private Members' motion. I appeal to the Minister to listen to our argument. It is clearly not acceptable that parents on low incomes are expected to wait for four months for clarity on this issue. Parents and community child care providers, such as the one in County Clare, must not be left in the dark. The scheme must be amended. It is time for the Government to get back in touch with the needs of families.

Deputy Tom Sheahan: Did the Minister of State have an input into the proposals put forward by his Department? As a rural TD, he must understand the repercussions of his proposals. Crèches in rural areas are not as efficient as those in urban areas. In rural areas, occupancy of 65% is common so it is impossible to work as cost effectively as in a crèche in an urban area.

In many cases both spouses are working, the mother is unable to find work three or four miles away and invariably must travel 30 miles in a car, costing up to €120 per week, to get to work. Who decides the percentage of income that makes child care affordable? This has not been addressed in the value for money report. Were the Minister of State's proposals to go ahead, such women would be obliged to leave the workplace and would no longer contribute towards their pensions. Given that this policy is being promoted by the Government, the proposal has not been thought through.

How will grants be calculated and distributed? I understand that grants are being calculated by the number of children in the crèche. My calculations suggest that grants are not being calculated on the basis of the age of the children in the crèche. I refer to the cost to the Exchequer. A total of 50% of a typical grant of €78,000 to a child care facility will return to the Government in PAYE and PRSI contributions. Consequently, accurate and reflective data regarding the actual cost to the Government should be obtained. I must also emphasise another point. A new child care facility has been built in my locality at a cost of €1.25 million. Were the Minister of State to proceed with his proposals, its doors would not

open. We will be left with white elephants throughout Ireland.

This week I spoke to a lady who has two children under three years of age. She gets them out of bed every morning at 6.15 a.m. to reach the child care facility by 7.15 a.m. to facilitate her arrival at work at 8 a.m. She has a net income of €410 and her child care costs her €270. She works 40 hours per week for a take home wage of €140 per week. I ask the Minister of State and Members on the other side of the House to support this motion and to think of the mothers and their children nationwide.

Deputy Michael D'Arcy: The Minister of State should listen to the points made by my colleagues. The recent example cited by Deputy Sheahan reflects what is taking place nationwide.

As the father of two young children and someone who relies on crèche facilities, I am acutely aware of the crippling child care costs imposed on parents in the State. Such costs can be even more demanding on those who are disadvantaged. The proposed new child care subvention scheme must be altered radically in order that neither children nor their parents in disadvantaged areas are neglected. It is a scheme that was tabled cynically by the Government for commencement in the year after the general election because it knew the measure would not be welcomed. It knew it would not be popular because it is aware it does not help some of those it is designed to help most.

In this case, it may be appropriate to say, "suffer little children". However, not only will children in disadvantaged areas suffer, so too will their parents and those who provide care for them in their home localities. Effectively, the present EOCP programme was designed as a back to work scheme in order that those who aspired towards a better quality of life, job satisfaction and a sense of self-worth by contributing to the community and reinstating themselves into society, could so do without being completely crippled by those child care costs to which Deputy Sheahan referred. Child care costs in Ireland are the highest in Europe and have risen by more than 22% in the last two years alone.

The current scheme, which was designed as a back to work measure, could be replaced by one that does the opposite. Those people who gain from employment, which helps their quality of life, self-esteem and self-worth, may be obliged to return to a reliance on social welfare payments because the new scheme will not make working a viable option. Those who are struggling at present may find that the scheme increases unbearably the financial pressures on them. Those who wish to obtain essential training and education will find it to be increasingly difficult, if not impossible. Members should be encouraging women to return to the workforce, to increase equality in the workforce and to create an increased sense of equality for the most disadvantaged, who most need it.

Deputy Joe McHugh: I welcome the Minister of State, Deputy Brendan Smith, to the House and congratulate my colleague, Deputy Shatter, on tabling this motion. This is a national issue and the Minister of State does not require Opposition Members to inform him of this. The Fianna Fáil Parliamentary Party had a robust debate on this issue and the Minister of State is aware that many of his colleagues are against the proposed new intervention and the new subvention scheme. However, the sad reality is that the Minister of State's parliamentary colleagues will back him tomorrow night in voting down the Fine Gael motion, which has been welcomed nationwide.

I attended a meeting in Letterkenny last night at which more than 200 service providers and parents were present. As the Minister has been involved in this game for much longer than me, the last thing he needs is some advice from a novice like me. However, as a rural Deputy or Minister of State, I advise him to take heed of developments. If this proposal is implemented on 1 July, this issue will be brought onto the streets. A campaign is being formed at present and the proposed changes are not going down well. I advise the Minister of State to intervene at this early stage.

The wheel was not broken, in that a bottom-up approach was in place whereby parents got together on a voluntary basis to work with service providers. Incidentally, those service providers worked on a voluntary basis at preschool for years as best they could under difficult circumstances. The advent of this scheme meant they could be rewarded for their work and could receive a wage. The devolved wage system that has been in use for the past six years worked and provided some credibility to the projects. In tandem with increased capital funding, there have been significant improvements in the manner in which young people are treated at a preschool level.

However, the Government proposals will take this away and will pull the carpet from under a working scheme. The scheme allowed children to sit side by side, whose parents were in receipt of family income support or social welfare benefits or whose parents were working at different levels of the income stream. We were getting rid of the stigmatisation of those who felt inadequate. Children were ready to enter primary school, where the sons and daughters of parents who were working would sit side by side with the sons and daughters of those in receipt of family income support and social welfare benefits. The Government's proposals will begin a process of segregation. A beautiful integration project was in place that operated on a bottom-up basis, was community and family-led and used the best possible practice. Young people with proper qualifications and training were involved and this scheme was working. However, the Minister of State is pulling the rug from under it.

Last September, as soon as I raised this issue, the Minister of State appeared on my local radio station one Friday evening to accuse me of being preposterous in my insinuation that the proposed scheme would not work. He came out with some sort of nonsense to the effect that funding would be increased by 16%. If this issue is considered at an economic level, there will be an increase in certain areas. However, how will such an increase take effect if, as my colleague, Deputy Sheahan, has noted, there will be white elephants dotted across the country? Such white elephants will lack both service providers and young people. This matter should be taken seriously and the Minister of State should heed the contributions to the debate from this side of the House.

Deputy Frank Feighan: I welcome this motion which "calls on the Government to radically modify the new proposed child care subvention scheme that the Government intends to become fully operation from 1 July 2008". I do not take great pleasure in this issue. For the last five years, Members have spent time attending the openings of crèches. They have observed how, from the bottom up, parents, children and teachers who provided care, have worked together in many communities, a considerable number of which were rural, to ensure their area was not left behind in the provision of child care. Many of the parents involved have gone to work and are delighted that the operation of this child care scheme over the past five years has provided them with the opportunity to enter the workplace. It has generated great self-esteem among the parents and their children. However, the proposed scheme may force parents to leave their employment and become dependent on social welfare schemes despite what we have been trying to achieve for many years. I visited Dromahair last Friday night and met hundreds of people who were extremely angry about this new scheme. That it targets disadvantage is to be welcomed. However, it is affecting the new disadvantaged, those on middle incomes and those who need this scheme to get into the workplace, to get ahead and to ensure that their children have the best child care places before they start school.

There is a saying "When you are in a hole, stop digging". The Minister is listening to all the signals. He knows about the public meetings being held around the country. He can hear the ordinary people, who have no interest in politics but have an interest in the future provision of child care and in providing for their children, who are telling us that this scheme is against the best interests of their children. We must listen to that. It is all right for us when we are in opposition, but the Minister is in government and I know he hears his party's Deputies and Senators talking about this. They are embarrassed by this scheme. Deputy O'Rourke said two weeks ago that the Minister should not listen to his officials but should do what he thinks is right. The officials in

the Department are only considering the bottom line and do not care about what happens in rural Ireland. I know the cupboards are bare and that a lot of things were promised in the election, but this time the Minister should listen to his backbenchers and the people at public meetings. If he modifies the proposed child care subvention scheme I will not say it is a U-turn but will welcome the fact that the Government has at last seen sense.

The scheme affects people in rural areas who must travel to work. We must address this. This new scheme renders it impossible for crèches to recruit new staff on a permanent basis. How can people get a mortgage or a car loan when there is a cloud hanging over child care provision? I ask the Minister to sit down with the members of his parliamentary party and talk about this. I ask him to do the right thing and reverse this disastrous proposal. I will welcome it when he does so.

Deputy Deirdre Clune: I discussed this matter with the Minister of State many times in the past month, including during Adjournment debates. I am sure he is well aware that a series of public meetings have been taking place across the country. There was one in Cork last week and there was also one in Donegal. These meetings reflect the real concern that is out there regarding the proposed changes in the community child care scheme, particularly changes to staffing grants.

The community child care facilities have worked extremely well. I represent a constituency which contains a number of RAPID areas and the community child care providers I talk to work in RAPID areas. The child care facilities have proved to be extremely valuable. They are certainly doing what they are supposed to do in that they give those who are welfare dependent the opportunity to move on by availing of education and joining the workforce. The problem that has been highlighted is that of parents on low incomes who will be excluded from using these facilities and will therefore once again become welfare dependent. Thus, the new scheme will reverse the progress that has been made by removing the supports that were previously available.

Generally, mothers are the people who depend on child care to get out to work. People on low incomes who are working in supermarkets, department stores or the major shopping centres that have sprung up around our cities depend on community child care to allow them to go to work. If a person is coming home with €200 per week and her child care costs are €100, that is 50% of her take-home pay. If she is coming home with €400, that is 25% of her take-home pay. The cost of child care in real terms is extremely high. I do not have a problem with this as it is important that we have high quality staff and facilities. We certainly cannot avoid those costs and we need to invest in child care. However, we need to support people to allow them to enter the

workforce and we need to support low-income workers. If people were allowed to include their child care costs to qualify for family income support the door would be open to many more people to avail of community child care facilities.

The Minister has extended the programme to July. Listening to the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Deputy Cullen, last week, I got the impression that there were to be changes to the scheme. There is an expectation that some changes will be made so I recommend that the Minister come forward with these sooner rather than later to avoid uncertainty and anger and to put the scheme on a proper footing so that people can move forward in the knowledge that there is certainty and that these valuable community facilities will continue to be available.

Deputy John O'Mahony: I am glad to have the opportunity to contribute briefly to this debate on our community child care services and I commend Deputy Shatter and Fine Gael on bringing forward this motion.

There is deep concern among community child care providers across the country that the proposed new child care subvention scheme will only lead to greater disadvantage within our communities. The new scheme would lead to massively increased fees which people on low incomes would find impossible to pay. The result would be that many community child care providers would be forced to close. In many cases, people on low incomes will be better off not working so that they have access to cheaper child care. We should make no mistake about it, this new scheme is a disincentive for people to join the workforce.

We are told that the changes being introduced are targeted at those who are disadvantaged, but the reality will be that these people will also be faced with a doubling of fees. Meanwhile, the increase in fees will create a whole new disadvantaged section of the population who are unable to afford child care. Staffing will be affected, jobs will be at risk and trained staff will be lost, which will in turn affect the quality of the service provided.

There is genuine fear among all partners involved in the provision of child care at the moment. In many cases, people from families in which two parents have entered the workforce are telling me that one of them will have to give up working outside the home. Many representatives of community child care groups have asked me whether the purpose of this scheme is to close down the community child care system. They also say that the changes are being proposed by people who have no understanding of how community models work. We should remember that these services are being run in the community by voluntary committees of working mothers who have invested much time and energy in making the projects the success that they are. In many cases staff attend meetings, training events and

[Deputy John O'Mahony.]

information sessions without any remittance from their employers. In most cases employers cannot afford the cost so employees bear the cost of training and related expenses.

If something is not broken, why fix it? Instead of rewarding these voluntary groups with praise for a job well done and continuing the scheme, the proposed changes are pulling the rug from under the feet of the community. Under the new scheme, the role of the community representatives will be more onerous because they will have to collect sensitive data from parents who, in many cases, are their neighbours. This should not have to be done by volunteers. Small rural child care providers in such areas of Mayo as Killeen, Clare Island, Bangor Erris, Bofeenan, Ballycroy, Robeen, Ballyglass, Ballinrobe and Kilmaine, to name but a few, who have explained their case to me, say that they will close if these changes go ahead. If they close, it is not because they are inefficiently managed but rather because of these ill thought-out changes to the scheme. I strongly support the Fine Gael motion.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: I do not know whether the Minister is serious about the changes in the child care subvention scheme. Up to now, child care facilities were co-funded under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006, but this will change at the end of the year. It is the responsibility of the Government to continue to fund this scheme in the manner in which it is currently being funded. If the Minister states that there is a 16% increase in funding, could he please explain, when he arrives, where this money is going? The reality on the ground does not reflect this. At present, parents are paying €32 per week for four days or €40 for five days of child care. Those same parents, if they are not on social welfare, will now pay €100 for a five-day week from July next. Apart from the hardship this extra expense will cause parents, there are two other negatives. First, as many of those community run child care facilities were set up to facilitate a parent, usually the mother, to get back in to the workforce, some of those may be on wages just above the threshold and will not be able to afford the increase in costs. In many disadvantaged areas of Connemara and Galway city those community based facilities enable mothers to return to the workforce and this change in funding will have a negative effect on such parents.

The second real danger is that with the increased cost many parents will no longer be able to afford to send their children to these child care facilities with the result that the facilities will close, parents will lose the benefit of being able to go back to work and the children will be deprived of the learning experience available in the facilities. I have personal experience of the benefit of such facilities in my constituency in Lettermullan, Lettermore, Clifden and Mervue

on the west side of Galway city. Many of those community child care facilities are run on a non-profit basis. My advice to the Minister of State is if it is not broken, do not fix it.

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Brendan Smith): I move amendment No. 1:

To delete all words after "Dáil Éireann" and substitute the following:

"notes:

- the success of the Equal Opportunity Childcare Programme (EOCP) in establishing a childcare infrastructure in Ireland from a very low base, creating over 35,000 childcare places, which support not just parents in accessing employment, education and/or training, but also provide many young children with the benefit of early years education;
- the role within that programme of the staffing scheme, which over 8 years provided a total of €174 million in supports for the running costs of community based not-for-profit services in disadvantaged areas;
- that the staffing scheme was originally awarded to such groups for a limited period, in order to allow them become self-sustaining where this was possible;
- that following this period, a number of such groups in very disadvantaged areas were awarded staffing continuation funding to the end of the EOCP, to allow them continue to reduce the fees charged to disadvantaged parents. A condition of this funding was the development of tiered fees, to ensure that the benefit of the grant aid went to the disadvantaged parents it was intended for. This also ensured that community services did not unfairly compete with private services for middle and higher income parents;
- that a value for money review was conducted of the EOCP in 2006-07, which consulted with all stakeholders, including community childcare providers, private childcare providers, parents, and Government Departments. While largely positive regarding the scheme, it called for the current method of funding to be replaced with a less *ad hoc* and more transparent system, which would more effectively target funding to disadvantaged groups. The community childcare subvention scheme (CCSS) has been developed to provide this framework;

- that the staffing scheme will cost over €37 million in 2007, whereas €153 million has been secured for the CCSS over the 3 year period 2008-10 starting with €47 million in 2008; and
- in addition to this targeted support for disadvantaged parents, universal support is available to all parents towards the cost of childcare through child benefit and the early childcare supplement, and the latter alone costs over €400 million in a full year;

welcomes:

- that on the announcement of the new scheme in July 2007, it was also announced that the current level of funding to services would continue to July 2008, to allow the collection of data which would allow costing of improvements to the subventions under the scheme, and that a series of regional seminars were held where this was outlined to community childcare providers;
- that the large majority of groups have already returned this data, and the Office of the Minister for Children has started to collate and analyse it in order to advise the Government in regard to any changes or improvements which may be introduced, as promised last July;
- the initial analysis of this data suggests that, under the new scheme, even with no subvention, the price charged to non-disadvantaged parents will be significantly below the market price of childcare, largely as a result of capital grant aid and the not-for-profit nature of the services in question;
- a number of services, which already had a strong focus on disadvantage and had implemented the tiered fee structure, have contacted the Office of the Minister for Children to say that, having got the information required from parents, they will now have an increased level of grant aid from July 2008, regardless of any future improvements; and
- the recent reiteration of the Office of the Minister for Children that this analysis will be completed early in 2008, and that enhancements based on the data will be presented to Government well in advance of next July;

endorses:

- the Government's approach to supplementing universal supports to all parents such as child benefit and early childcare supplement, with additional supports to parents who would not

otherwise be able to afford childcare and early years education for their children; and

- the steps taken to ensure that this targeted funding benefits the most disadvantaged of children, who would not otherwise have access to such services.”

I wish to share time with Deputies Calleary, Moynihan, Finian McGrath and Finneran.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Charlie O'Connor):

Is that agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Brendan Smith: The community child care subvention scheme is a new support scheme for community-based child care services which is being introduced under the national child care investment programme, NCIP, 2006-10 and which will come into effect in 2008.

I am concerned at some of the negative reporting in recent weeks regarding the scheme which is undoubtedly causing some unnecessary concern to child care providers in the community sector and to parents and staff associated with these services. The Fine Gael motion, and the way it is being presented in some elements of the press, will contribute to this mis-reporting and the unnecessary concerns. I am pleased to have this further opportunity to set the record straight in regard to the community child care subvention scheme, which has the sole purpose of continuing to support the community child care sector. I am also pleased to have this opportunity to explain once again the deliberate and measured way, over a 12 month period, in which the new subvention scheme is being introduced.

Since the announcement in July of this year of the Government's decision to introduce the new scheme in 2008, two of the most significant points which I continue to make have been consistently overlooked or ignored. These are that the scheme has been designed to take effect following a 12 month transition phase, one of the key reasons for which was to enable an in-depth analysis of the scheme, as announced, to be undertaken. The fact that I intend to report back with the outcome of this process to my colleagues in Government in early 2008, appears to be something of a surprise to the Deputies supporting the Private Members' motion. That position has been outlined consistently since July last.

As I said in the Seanad last week, there appears to be an impression that the Government will walk away from its €1.1 billion investment in child care from 2000 to 2010, over half of which has been spent to date. There also appears to be an impression that the policy of putting community-based child care at the heart of our investment in child care will cease to be a fundamental principle of this investment despite the success of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-06 and the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-10, much of which has been

[Deputy Brendan Smith.]

built on the contribution and work of community volunteers, as has been mentioned by Deputy Shatter and others. Nothing could be further from the truth and the new scheme is being introduced to continue this recognition and support for the community not-for-profit sector.

As Deputies will be aware, the new subvention scheme will replace the EOCP staffing support scheme which ends next month. The eight year EOCP, which has been co-funded by the Exchequer and EU Structural Funds, was the first major investment programme in child care in Ireland. It adopted a particular focus on disadvantage and the community not-for-profit sector was able to apply for 100% capital grant funding, up to a ceiling of €1.4 million per project, to develop community based child care facilities. Community child care services were also supported with current funding, under the staffing support grant scheme. This scheme made funding towards the cost of child care staff available, recognising that, even where the full capital cost of these projects was met through grant funding, and despite being non-profit bodies, community child care groups which were located in disadvantaged areas and which had a strong focus on disadvantage, might not be in a position to become self-sustainable in the short to medium term.

Specific funding was allocated under the scheme to assist community providers in their start-up years to target disadvantaged parents and their children using their services. The grant was given on a three year basis as a support towards the services' staffing costs. It took this form because supporting employment for child care workers qualified for grant aid under the EU rules governing the programme. The original three year funding under this scheme began to end for some groups from 2004 onwards. In most cases, where the community services receiving staffing grants were able to confirm their continuing focus on disadvantage, they were approved for continuation funding to bring them up to the end of the EOCP in December this year.

The ability of projects which receive developmental aid to become self-sustainable over time through funding support in their developmental stage, is an underlying principle of both the European Social Fund and the Exchequer. The principle of self-sustainability was built into the EOCP from the outset and has been an explicit condition of grant approval since 2004 when the continuation funding commenced. As a result, every existing EOCP staffing grant recipient has agreed to operate a tiered fee system which is tailored to the differing economic circumstances of their client group and which ensures that child care places subsidised by the programme are targeted towards those most in need. In effect, the grant recipients were required to use their grant aid to give a high degree of subsidisation to very disadvantaged parents, a lesser degree of subsidisation to less disadvantaged parents, and no

subsidisation, other than the general benefit of the capital grant aid, to non-disadvantaged parents.

The new community child care subvention scheme will continue to be based on the tiered fee system. Under the new scheme, services will continue to receive grant aid on the basis that they charge fees to parents which relate directly to the level of subvention they receive in respect of particular parents. I should say that many community child care groups implemented effective tiered fee systems and complied with this requirement under the EOCP, thereby enabling disadvantaged parents to access child care at reduced costs. However, it is also the case that many services did not implement this requirement as envisaged under the programme and, for them, the new scheme will require them to review their current fee structures.

I can see that for community services which were not implementing an effective tiered fee system up to now, the new scheme may appear to be an intrusion into the way they operate their services. The comment could be made that the more structured approach under the new scheme, to ensure that all services implement effective tiered fee structures, should have been introduced earlier. It is a point that Deputy Shatter made earlier. I would not support this view as I think it was important that the EOCP responded in a developmental way to fostering and supporting the community services and their invaluable work and contribution to local child care services. However, as with any programme, in particular an innovative and developmental one such as the EOCP, in moving forward it is important to build on strengths and identify weaknesses.

The value for money review of the EOCP made recommendations for a new community support scheme under the NCIP, which it identified as a transitional programme which should complete the development of new child care services while longer-term child care policy would be considered in the context of a third child care programme for 2011-15. These recommendations emphasised the need for the NCIP community support scheme to be based on having effective tiered fee structures in place with appropriate minimum and maximum fees. In addition, eligibility for funding should be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure all services move towards sustainability when this is possible and the new scheme should be less *ad hoc*, more structured and transparent, and better targeted on appropriate groups, including socially excluded groups.

In considering those aspects of the staffing support scheme which could benefit from more structured and transparent systems and criteria, it is clear that a more consistent approach is required in determining the level of grant aid and the way it is used, than was the case under the EOCP. In order to qualify for the staffing grant scheme, community child care groups were first required to show that they were located in a disadvantaged

area, with CLÁR and RAPID as the two key indicators in this respect. After that, the group was asked to demonstrate in its grant application that it would adopt a strong focus on disadvantage. This was largely a self-reporting system with no clear data, particularly as time went by, on the level of disadvantage in the services. Clearly, with the economic upturn and high employment rates now enjoyed in Ireland, the profile of disadvantaged parents using the services has, possibly, changed considerably and the increase in employment is welcome.

As the profile of services in receipt of grant funding changed over time, different services responded in different ways. Many services implemented effective tiered fee structures enabling the broad range of parents and their children to benefit based on their ability to pay and ensuring a good social mix. Where services did not implement an effective tiered fee structure but charged reduced fees across the board, in some cases this resulted in very low fees for all parents, including non-disadvantaged parents, sometimes leading to an inability to compete on the part of other, non-subsidised private sector providers in the area. Where services combined the grant aid with their increasing ability to collect more substantial fees and adopted a higher, across the board rate, this often resulted in a very high quality of service provision, but one that was outside the reach of the disadvantaged parents for whom the grant aid was intended.

Another weakness of the current scheme is its non-transparency and the fact that the broadly drawn criteria resulted in a high level of subjectivity in the assessment of grant applications. There have been cases where applications from services with very similar levels of disadvantage and service provision were approved for substantially different levels of funding. Again, the subjectivity of the criteria was not assisted by the degree of self-reporting on which the system relied. In addition, the current scheme penalises large-scale services which have very disadvantaged profiles, as the level of grant funding is capped and disadvantaged parents using a community service which is not located in a disadvantaged area could not avail of the subsidised fees as the scheme is defined by reference to the area rather than the parent.

All of these issues highlight the fact that in meeting the needs of the existing grant-aided community child care sector, as well as moving forward to any future child care programme of initiatives, we need to address a series of diverse and complex issues. However, the fundamental principle which must guide us in meeting these needs, and at the same time further developing child care policy, is that we ensure that we find a fair and equitable approach to targeting disadvantaged parents using community child care facilities which is underpinned by transparency and accountability.

The new scheme has been portrayed widely as a cutback in funding for the community sector and for disadvantaged parents and their children. Nothing could be further from the truth and the new scheme has been given a total funding allocation of €153 million over three years. This means that in 2008, some €47 million will be available to the new scheme while €37.25 million was available under the EOCP staffing scheme in 2007. This substantial increase in funding is intended to ensure that the greatest number of children and parents using community-based child care services benefit. The truth is that, in the absence of sufficiently hard data to enable my office to accurately quantify and cost a more generous scheme under the new, more transparent arrangements, it was decided to identify the most disadvantaged categories of parents at the outset. Clearly we could not disregard these parents and start at higher income levels but, equally, we could not commit to a scheme which goes beyond the most disadvantaged categories until we are in a position to accurately quantify and cost the outcome.

This is the essential reason an innovative, transitional approach to the introduction of the scheme was adopted. As more than 800 services are currently in receipt of staffing grant support, the first priority was to continue funding for these services during the transitional period. All of the existing grant recipients who apply for funding under the new scheme will receive their existing level of funding during the first half of 2008. To date, applications have been received from approximately 75% of the existing grant recipients and these are being processed as quickly as possible by my officials. When the first priority of informing these services that they have been approved for funding under the new scheme has been completed, work will begin on the detailed analysis of the services in terms of the type of services they provide, the profile of the parents using the services for their children, the operational costs, and any other relevant data which might indicate that a special need exists which requires a particular approach to be adopted.

My officials and I have stressed at every opportunity that this data is essential to enable the assessment of the scheme, as announced, to be undertaken, and that the urgency with which this is being undertaken is to facilitate the existing services to move to the new scheme without disruption. As I stated, the first priority is to inform the services that they have been approved for transitional funding. After that, the analysis of the data will be completed and I will be considering the various issues which emerge so that I can meet my commitment to report back to the Government in early 2008. Subject to the Government's decision and any changes agreed, my office will then be in contact with the services to advise them of their new funding level, based on the information provided with their application and the final details of the scheme. I hope

[Deputy Brendan Smith.]

to see this process fully completed by the end of February or early March 2008.

Clearly, I cannot be specific in advance of any Government decision as to what changes will take place. However, I reiterate that the scheme will be implemented in a way which maximises the outcome for parents and their children using community child care facilities and that the funding which has been provided for this purpose has been greatly enhanced.

Deputy Dara Calleary: It is my pleasure to speak in support of the amendment. It is important that we stand back to reflect on where we have come under the equal opportunities childcare programme. A total of 35,000 extra child care places that did not exist in 2000 have been created with an investment of €500 million. It is on that basis that we move on to the new programme outlined by the Minister of State. The figures are quite staggering. The sum of €575 million has been allocated with a target of creating 50,000 extra child care places. Combined investment of approximately €100 million will lead to the creation of 80,000 child care places. With that kind of investment on the part of the Government it was essential to have a value for money audit. It is important in every way that the reporting would be tightened up so that everybody involved in managing the sector could be assured the investment was being targeted in the proper direction.

It is important to reflect on the Minister of State's remark that the scheme is under review. The review will be based on the returns that were due to be submitted last Friday week. Those returns will show the exact level of disadvantage among the current clients of the community child care scheme. Based on the information given in the returns, we will then be able to make a proper assessment and adjudication of the new scheme.

From my experience of the sector and from what I have heard from constituents in recent weeks, it appears the data from the forms will reveal flaws in the new system. The jump from band B to band C, from families on family income supplement with a certain level of support, to virtually no support under band C, is too severe and restrictive. I am confident when the data come back they will show a large numbers= of families which are not eligible for FIS, but which will need support. The national child care investment programme will require the benefit of a higher subsidy than is currently on offer in order to allow people to maintain their place and to keep working.

The data will show that in some areas and in some facilities the original aim of the programme has become skewed and that children are in facilities enjoying rates that were intended for families who are disadvantaged or on low incomes, whose parents are able to afford a higher rate. The places they are currently occupying are at the expense of other children.

The new system presents a particular difficulty for child care facilities in rural areas. I refer in particular to the minimum numbers required to access the grant and retain viability. As a rural Deputy, the Minister of State, Deputy Smith, appreciates and understands this point. It should be possible to provide an administration grant for rural facilities whose geographic catchment area is probably quite large but whose population centre is quite small, which are forced to look in many different directions in order to fill the places and maintain the viability of the centre. This option should be examined for rural services whose viability could not otherwise be maintained. The grant could be subject to conditions in regard to quality, service need in the area and the capacity to deliver.

There is significant concern among organisations and committees involved in running child care facilities about data collection. Even though the data required is quite basic, and is information that is freely available to many people, there is an understandable concern about information getting into the hands of the wrong people. The data collection aspect of the scheme should be transferred to the county child care committees or even to the Office of the Minister for Children so as to take the local manager out of the data collection system altogether. This approach would ensure we would still manage to acquire that information.

It appears people have forgotten about the allocation of the child care supplement of €2,000. In many centres this payment should be diverted to supplement the payment of child care. The Government must reflect on this payment and redesign it in the context of the new scheme.

The Fine Gael motion is premature. It is only two weeks since the deadline for the submission of the data from all the centres around the country, which will no doubt provide 8 o'clock proof for the various claims that have been made. Given that much of that data will not get back to the Minister before next February, I suggest this motion is premature. I am confident that when the data come back, the Minister will act in the interests of the community sector but, more importantly, in the interests of disadvantaged children and parents to ensure they continue to have access to the places in the community child care sector and that they can continue to work, should they wish, while using the facility. I am confident that given the level of investment in the previous programme — €500 million is a great deal of money — the Minister will ensure white elephants are not created in some of the fantastic centres that have been established.

Deputy Finian McGrath: I welcome the opportunity to speak in this important debate on child care. I commend the many magnificent crèches and child care groups that are doing excellent and valuable work. If we are serious about tackling

child poverty and educational disadvantage, the focus of the spending must go to the most disadvantaged children who would not have access to such services.

I welcome the provision of €37 million in 2007 and the €47 million for 2008, starting after Christmas. These are major progressive developments and to say otherwise is misleading. I especially welcome the extra funding that will go to the most disadvantaged children and families in Dublin North-Central. I raised these issues in my talks with the Taoiseach and I am glad to see some of them being rolled out in this debate.

Deputy Alan Shatter: Is there anything for which the Deputy does not claim responsibility?

Deputy Finian McGrath: On a wider level, I welcome the extra funding of €88,441 in information and communications technology grants for 18 schools in my constituency and the additional funding of €108,377 for Dublin North-Central schools. I have also seen in recent weeks €1,165,485 being provided for a disabled housing project in Coolock, the setting up of the Greendale school for autistic children on the north side and extra educational services in the Marino area. These are all clear strategies to improve our educational services for children and a direct attempt to build a future for our young people.

An examination of the detailed figures in this debate will show that €153 million spent over the next three years is a massive investment in child care for the poorest sections of our society. Investing in child care and education is an investment in the future. It will create a better chance for our children and enable them to make choices that can sustain them for the rest of their lives and make them valuable members of our community.

I came into politics through the community and voluntary sector and these are issues concerning my broader vision for this country. Child care and quality education are the engine room of any future economy and will improve the quality of life for all our people. I also welcome the fact that on the announcement of the new scheme in July 2007, it was also announced that the current level of funding to services would continue to July 2008 to allow the collection of data, which would allow costing of improvements to the subventions under the scheme, and that a series of regional seminars were held at which this was outlined to community child care providers. The initial analysis of the data suggests that under the new scheme, even with no subvention, the price charged to non-disadvantaged parents will be significantly below the market price of child care largely as a result of capital grant aid and the not-for-profit nature of the services in question. As well as this, a number of services which already had a strong focus on disadvantage and implemented the tiered fee structure have contacted the office of the Minister for children to

say that having got the information required from parents, they will now have an increased level of grant aid from July 2008 regardless of any future improvements. In other words, the most disadvantaged will gain more in this debate. That should be our focus.

We must build on improving child care services to ensure that all our children are cherished equally and every child in this State gets a good chance in a lifelong learning process. It is only then that we can all say there is equality in this area.

Deputy Michael Finneran: I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate on child care and the success story that is child care support in this country. The Government has directly promoted the development of preschool infrastructure virtually from scratch, so to speak. We should be proud that since 2000, the European Union has supported the equal opportunities child care programme which means that many mothers have been in a position to go back into the workforce knowing there is a child care facility available to them to care for their children. That programme has been a success and to date more than 35,000 new child care places have been created in the community, not-for-profit and private provider sectors.

A total of €500 million has been invested in that programme and we now move into the national child care investment programme. It is important to state that this programme is being financed entirely from the Exchequer. In fact, it is being funded by taxpayers. It is important that we establish that—

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: The mothers of the country. If they want to work they must have their children minded.

Deputy Michael Finneran: —ensure there is fairness and that people who cannot afford child care are given priority as regards this programme.

The programme will be of support to people in disadvantage and I am keen that should be the case. In some cases it has been suggested that people on low incomes will not be in a position to avail of this programme. I disagree with that wholeheartedly. This issue is a very different one. What has happened in some cases is that well-salaried people are using community child care facilities. They are availing of the same services at the same cost as those who are disadvantaged. That is not appropriate in terms of fairness or an equal playing field.

Child care facilities are now set up throughout the country. In my constituency we are very proud of an investment of more than €10 million in the child care programme in recent years, with wonderful facilities and more than 900 places in the county. We are proud of the community services and the private providers.

[Deputy Michael Finneran.]

The one concern people have is the Civil Service getting involved in this programme to such an extent that a bureaucracy will be created. That is something we do not want and the Minister must ensure that does not happen. He should keep the support system for community child care simple to ensure those people are in a position to avail of the grants in the best interests of the people involved.

The ordinary taxpayer is conscious of the enormous amount of money that will be invested in the coming years up to 2010. They want to see that this money will go to the people who need it. The debate has focused somewhat on people who are on social welfare. That is unfortunate and it is a turnaround from what we had previously because the original programme, the equal opportunities child care programme, was aimed at getting people back to work. The new programme should not be aimed at people on social welfare. It must ensure those people who returned to work are in a position to stay there because they got the opportunity of having their children cared for. It is important we identify with low income families and ensure they are part of the new regime of supports in the child care programme.

I am very pleased the Minister showed common sense by allowing the 12-month period when this programme was announced. I have met and consulted many groups in my constituency and asked them to forward documentation to me — I will forward it to the Minister — outlining any difficulties they see in the operation of the programme. Any pitfalls or difficulties that may arise will be identified between now and next May or June. It is important that child care providers cooperate with the Department to tease out difficulties in the interest of child care provision until 2010.

Statements concerning cutbacks in child care are inaccurate and should not have been made.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: There is a €750,000 cutback.

Deputy Michael Finneran: During the next year, the child care programme will receive a 16% increase. Deputy Finian McGrath welcomed the €47 million made available for 2008. The Opposition motion is political opportunism. It should submit appropriate proposals to the Department instead of making a political issue of it. People in many constituencies are making all kinds of statements and hyping something that will not be concluded until July 2008. In the interests of a proper analysis of the child care programme, the way in which it is to be funded and who will receive grants, it is important to have a balanced and open debate with all of the available information, including that provided by

child carers to the Minister and other public representatives. We want one of Europe's best child care facilities.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: I would like to share time with Deputies Penrose and Ó Caoláin.

Acting Chairman: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: Listening to the debate has been interesting rather than enlightening. The previous speaker was not lobbied as ferociously as the rest of us. Not for the first time, light was originally cast on this issue in Cork. Public representatives were asked to attend a public meeting last week by the Early Years Network, an umbrella group in Cork city and county. The meeting made it obvious that the cutbacks in community child care would ensure that the people to whom the previous speaker referred would not be able to afford child care in their communities.

I do not know who stated that there are lies, damned lies and statistics, but it is a combination of the three in this instance. Statistics are being used to tell a lie. Am I allowed to say "lie"? I am, as the Acting Chairman did not stop me.

Acting Chairman: I am being tolerant, but the Deputy should not repeat herself.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: The Acting Chairman is from Tallaght, so he is tolerant. There is a difficulty regarding the amount of funding in the next tranche. According to the Department's figures, funding of €500 million in the first tranche provided 30,000 places. It is hoped the next tranche's funding of €575 million will provide 50,000 places, but the Government has not made the initial 30,000 places sustainable. People are expected to sink or swim, which is what former Deputy, Michael McDowell, tried to do while he was the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. He was stopped in his tracks by the outcry and furore the proposal engendered among the public, a head of steam that is rebuilding.

According to the previous speaker, the Minister is so caring and good that he has allowed a year's lead-in and consultation, but that is not the case. When the programme was first published, the time cited was January 2008. The Minister extended that to next June because of the type of representation put in place last week in Cork. I worry when something is extended to June and implemented in July. As we know, the Government will be on holidays and assuming that others have done likewise, meaning we cannot address a matter until the following September or October. The cutbacks will ensure that people on limited incomes who are not in receipt of social welfare payments, including the family income supplement, will not be able to afford child care in their areas.

As for the statement that we have a magnificent child care system, the 30,000 places are good because expertise and provision has been built up, but to say they will be sufficient to address demand is outrageous, ridiculous and untrue. Events in Dublin and certain areas of Cork will recur, namely, the provision of child care will be ghettoised so that only the children of the poor will receive child care or early childhood intervention. This is not what good child care is about. It is not only about early educational needs, but also social interaction.

The Government does not care about good quality child care. It is only interested in stretching its money as far as possible. If I worked in a crèche and knew that my provision for next June would mean a decrease from ten workers to four workers, I would not wait in hope until then were I to see another job on the horizon. I would move on. We will lose expertise and the people who provide excellent care.

Today's *Evening Echo* carries a story of a young mother. The headline reads "I can't afford to have more children". The Government forced people into the workplace because the economy demanded it. This was not bad. The Government does not care about children and will not provide the type of child care needed by the women in question. Eventually, they will say that they can take no more and that they are going home.

Deputy Willie Penrose: I rise as someone who does not need to depend on empirical or anecdotal evidence because I am the only Deputy present who is a director of a not-for-profit child care body. I am also a member of the Westmeath County Childcare Committee.

I am flabbergasted to hear the likes of Deputy Finian McGrath speaking in riddles and rhymes. Are they behaving like ostriches and are their heads buried in the sand? Why would Sr. Finbarr in Mullingar, who has worked with the disadvantaged and marginalised for many years and who is involved in child care, attend a public meeting and state that the scheme proposed by the Minister will be a disaster? The Deputy spoke about someone who is at the coalface of child care provision to ensure lone parents get opportunities to return to the workforce. The best route out of poverty is through a job. Many lone parents, low income parents and parents on social welfare payments have found this to be the case. It is a truism.

The way the scheme is structured will create a poverty trap. The minute one tries to improve oneself, everything is lost. No one should tell me about it because I work in this area. I will give the House our scheme's evidence. Our child care facility has ten workers and 50 children or so, many of whom have moved on over the years and are now putting their own children into the facility. It is a high quality, accessible and afford-

able system. It is not-for-profit and complies with the regulations and stipulations. It has been visited by environmental health officers and public health nurses. It must meet all the conditions and eligibility criteria. The scheme under which we received the money under the equal opportunities child care programme will be €70,000 short after the changes proposed by the Minister. As a director of a not-for-profit child care facility, a limited company, I will have an obligation to double the prices to ensure it is properly run and no reckless trading is involved. That will be all right for a few people who are well off but what about those who are on social welfare? Subvention will be fixed and they will have to find more money to pay for child care. That is nonsense.

I cannot believe this scheme was approved. The only reason it is being reviewed is because its financing has moved from the European to the national Exchequer. This scheme was overseen by the Department of Finance. There was token consultation. We were not consulted. Many who use these crèches are the working poor who work hard from morning to night, leave their children in, pay substantial mortgages, pay for child care and transport to get to their jobs and are left with little on which to survive. It is time the Minister woke up to this fact because he does not realise the damage that will be done. Why would all the facilities in my area from Rathowen to Dromard in Longford to Kenagh, Kinnegad and Ballynacargy be up in arms? Why is there a mass uprising? The scheme must be reviewed. It must be put on the back burner. The Minister must ensure a proper scheme that allows affordable child care be put in place.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The debate on child care we should be having is about how to ensure the best care for our children, including in the home, at school and in crèches. We should debate how the State can support such a caring system and how it can be delivered to all who need it on the basis of need alone. Instead, once again, we are addressing a critical situation, a botched Government scheme that has thrown the community child care system into chaos. This need not have happened. If the Department of Health and Children had consulted the community child care sector when it was framing a new scheme and if it had listened to what it was told by those on the front line of child care delivery, this situation would not have arisen.

The Government's approach has led first to confusion, then serious concern and now alarm among thousands of child care workers and parents. The proposed new community child care subvention scheme is fundamentally flawed. Throughout this State over recent weeks community child care workers and parents have been meeting to organise against the implementation

[Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin.]

of this scheme in its present form. It requires radical and fundamental reform.

In my constituency child care workers at Farney community crèche in Carrickmacross, County Monaghan, have predicted that if this scheme goes ahead many parents will pull out of the crèche and it will have to double its fees. Like other such child care facilities, it could be forced to close, resulting in loss of jobs. Farney community crèche has provided affordable child care in Carrickmacross for more than a decade. It has allowed many parents, especially women, to take up the opportunity for jobs and training. This is under threat.

The Farney experience is replicated right across the Twenty-six Counties. From Donegal to Wexford and from Dublin to Mayo, the community child care subvention scheme has provoked intense opposition. The Minister of State with responsibility for children, Deputy Brendan Smith, is aware of this. I met him recently in the company of other County Monaghan Oireachtas Members when he was lobbied by representatives of the community child care sector in our shared constituency. Without exception those representatives made clear to the Minister of State their strong objections to the scheme.

In response to the widespread alarm at the scheme the Minister of State has indicated that the subvention will not be confined to parents in receipt of social welfare. This may be the beginning of a U-turn or it may not. It has certainly caused further confusion. The scheme has been clearly signalled to community child care workers as one designed for recipients of social welfare payments. The application forms filled in by parents and collected by the crèches reflect this original design of the scheme.

Last week my Dáil office received a briefing from officials in the Minister of State's office. I thank the Minister of State, Deputy Brendan Smith, for that opportunity. However, the briefing confirmed that the scheme will go ahead as planned and that it is based primarily on subsidisation of child care costs for parents in receipt of social welfare. In addition, the officials informed us that the application forms received will be assessed to ascertain the overall profile of parents using crèches subsidised under the equal opportunities child care programme. We are told that based on the assessment, the Government will decide how widely to extend the subvention beyond those on social welfare. The Minister's office indicates that a decision on a new income threshold will be announced in February.

The Government has felt the need to respond to the upsurge of opposition to this scheme but it is unclear what the outcome will be. It is essential, therefore, to emphasise again the key points of objection to the scheme as it will remain essentially the same scheme and with the same nega-

tive consequences. Nobody disagrees with the stated intent of the scheme which is to make child care more accessible for low income parents. Too many families still cannot gain access to child care owing to lack of affordability. This has serious consequences for children and for parents who wish to improve the lives of their families through part-time or full-time employment. Far from meeting these needs in a fair manner, however, the new scheme, if implemented in its present form, could lead to a two-tier child care system. We could have one tier of crèches for people on social welfare and other low income families and another tier for those paying the full cost. The application procedure has already placed an excessive burden on often small community child care services that operate with few staff and feel overwhelmed by the bureaucracy that has landed on their desks.

I emphasise again that there are already clear indications that this new scheme will lead to fees being increased significantly for those not on social welfare and it could also lead to crèches closing if they do not have sufficient numbers on social welfare on their books. This scheme will undoubtedly drive many parents, especially women, back out of work and into social welfare dependence. They will find that as they are not on social welfare they will not qualify for child care subvention and will face higher child care fees. This will eat up their income and they will conclude that it is not worth their while working. They will lose the opportunity to work and the community child care facilities will lose them as clients.

We call on the Minister of State with responsibility for children, Deputy Brendan Smith, to suspend the introduction of the new scheme, extending the EOCP in the meantime, pending full consultation with the community child care sector. I emphasise that full consultation is crucial. We need to get this right and not put in place a flawed system that could cause untold problems in the future and would be very difficult to unravel. The Minister of State may well decide to extend the subvention, for example, to those with the full medical card. The difference between the social welfare and the medical card thresholds would be marginal. However the danger is that this would be presented as a major concession and extension of the scheme and that would not be the case. I hope the Minister of State will note this fact because if that is the area in which he is considering extending the remit of the scheme it will fall significantly short of what he needs to do.

The scheme is fundamentally flawed. We should move towards universal provision of pre-school child care. This scheme moves us in the opposite direction towards a two-tier structure that mirrors our grossly inequitable two-tier health service. Sinn Féin has set out its vision of

how the State should address this important issue of child care. We believe the Government should have the following goals and should work to achieve them within a definite timeframe.

Debate adjourned.

Adjournment Debate.

Child Care Services.

Deputy Denis Naughten: I thank the Ceann Comhairle for giving me the opportunity to raise this matter. The Mantua preschool child care facility in County Roscommon was established in September to carry out two functions. It was to provide a service for young children and their parents in the local communities, while also securing the long-term future of Mantua national school, which was originally built in 1872 and is one of Ireland's oldest primary schools. A few years ago the school was on a knife edge, as it was threatened with closure due to dwindling numbers. The local community looked at the issue and thought of providing child care facilities locally. The preschool would support those numbers at the school.

There was a spare room at the school that was not being used, so the community established a child care committee and, subsequently, the pre-school facility in Mantua national school. The community raised funds for the projects, including over €2,000 at a function in the local pub. They have also held car boot sales, an auction and a church gate collection. They also submitted an application to Pobal for funding. The school in question is recognised as disadvantaged by the Department of Education and Science under the DEIS scheme.

The number of young families moving into the Mantua area is growing, which augurs well for the future of the child care facility and the school itself. The school applied for an interim staffing grant under the interim staffing measure of the NCIP, but it received a response from the Department that it had not demonstrated the ability to manage and sustain the service efficiently. The service is up and running since 3 September, with five children on board. A vacant classroom in an existing school is being used, and a modern child care service is being provided. It is being managed by an experienced child care leader who is being paid from the funds that have been raised by the local community. This small, rural community has raised over €2,000 to get this facility up and running. The parents and the committee have told me that their funds are almost exhausted and they will have to close this Christmas unless the Minister rescinds the decision that was made.

They also plan to expand the existing service to include an after-school service, but they cannot cater for that without the provision of funding from the Department. The future of the school itself is in doubt if this funding is not provided. There are several examples in my constituency of schools with small roll numbers, but they have managed to maintain and even increase numbers by putting child care facilities in vacant classrooms. In this way, they have supported local education provision.

In their response to the local community in Mantua, departmental officials stated that a new scheme would be coming into place from 1 January 2008 and that community representatives should contact the county child care committee to make an application. The difficulty is that this facility will close at Christmas if the school does not get an interim funding grant from the Department to keep it going until it can apply under the new scheme. We have been consistently told that the objective of the scheme is to support disadvantaged communities. I ask the Minister of State to provide the interim funding to keep the facility going.

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Brendan Smith): I thank the Deputy for raising this issue. The programme for Government and the progress of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006 and the national child care investment programme are confirmation of the Government's commitment to developing child care services to support the child care needs of parents. The NCIP 2006-2010 has a funding allocation of €575 million and aims to create an additional 50,000 new child care places. It is expected that approximately 22,000 of these places will be in the private sector and 28,000 in the community and not-for-profit sector. Twenty per cent of the overall places will be for children in the three to four age group and will provide an early childhood care and education focus.

The NCIP programme incorporates a number of key objectives. It will increase the supply and quality of early childhood care and education services across the board. It will also support families in breaking the cycle of disadvantage and will provide co-ordinated approach to the delivery of child care that is centred on the needs of the child. Both the EOCP and NCIP have a combined budget of almost €1.1 billion and are projected to create over 90,000 child care places, which are provided either through community-based and not-for-profit child care groups or by private providers.

When taken into account with other child care related measures, such as the increases in paid and unpaid maternity leave, the introduction of the early childhood supplement worth €1,000 per year per child under six, and tax relief for child

[Deputy Brendan Smith.]

mind, no one can doubt that the Government is giving this issue the priority it deserves. Many child care services throughout Roscommon have benefited from grant assistance under the EOCP and the NCIP. To date, funding of over €10 million has been approved for child care in Roscommon, supporting the creation of 766 new child care places and supporting over 714 existing places throughout the county.

The group in question applied for interim support funding under the NCIP and was declined in September 2007, as its application had not demonstrated sufficient ability to manage and sustain the service efficiently and, therefore, did not meet the requirements of the NCIP interim support scheme. The group was invited to contact its local county child care committee, should it wish to apply for funding under the new community child care subvention scheme, which will come into effect in January 2008. The group requested a review of this decision and its request, along with any details provided by the group, have been forwarded to Pobal, which oversees the day-to-day management of the programmes on behalf of my office, for an assessment which will be considered by the programme appraisal committee. That committee will make its recommendation to the Secretary General who in turn will make the final decision, and the group will be informed of the decision. It would be improper of me to prejudge the outcome of that process in advance of the final decision.

The interim support scheme under the NCIP was introduced as an interim measure, pending the introduction of the new community child care subvention scheme, to facilitate groups which were unable to meet the contractual deadline of December 2006 for funding under the EOCP staffing support scheme. Under the EOCP, targeted support was provided for community-based not-for-profit child care providers through the staffing support grant scheme. The community child care subvention scheme under the NCIP is the successor programme to the EOCP staffing grant and will be introduced on 1 January 2008.

This scheme has been allocated €153 million over the next three years, representing a 16% increase in funding over the EOCP staffing scheme. Under the new scheme, services will be grant aided according to the service they provide and the profile of the parents who benefit. In turn, the subvention received by the services will be reflected in the reduced fees for parents who qualify as disadvantaged under the scheme. It is hoped that the new scheme will provide an effective framework for the continued targeting of additional resources towards disadvantaged parents and their children, while continuing to support community child care services generally.

The more detailed and comprehensive data which has been generated by the new scheme will

be analysed by officials in my office between now and the end of December. As outlined at the launch of the scheme last July and at regional seminars held by my officials since then, this data will allow any adjustments necessary to secure the best outcomes for child care services and for disadvantaged parents and their children, and will be considered by the Government in early 2008 and well in advance of the commencement of the new funding levels in July 2008. I asked the review committee to analyse further the data submitted by the group and to make a decision as soon as possible on the application.

Deputy Denis Naughten: I hope the Minister of State looks sympathetically on it.

Deputy Brendan Smith: I am sure the officials will analyse it in great detail.

Job Creation.

Deputy Michael Lowry: In the past week a shattering and demoralising blow has been inflicted on the diligent and committed workforce at Premier Foods, Thurles, County Tipperary. This company and the Erin brand, synonymous with Thurles, announced that it was to cease production, resulting in the loss of 95 jobs.

The workforce and their dependent families have endured prolonged uncertainty and fear of the unknown. Arising from this decision, they face the prospect of coping with the daily pressures of life without a job and financial security. We have an obligation and responsibility to provide alternative job opportunities.

Will the Minister ensure the UK management of Premier Foods, the parent company of Erin, offers the current staff facing lay-off the maximum terms and conditions for redundancy? Will he also ensure every support and resource is made available by the State to these 95 people to assist them in seeking new employment?

I question the role of the Competition Authority in the demise of the Thurles Erin plant. The authority's decision that Premier Foods had to divest from the Erin brand at the beginning of the year cast a long shadow over the future of the Thurles plant and its viability. It is outrageous that the Competition Authority, operating autonomously, could make a decision which sounded the death knell of the Thurles plant.

The plant's closure concludes the gradual obliteration of the manufacturing base in Thurles. In the not too distant past, north Tipperary was home to some of the world's largest industrial companies such as Aventis Pharma, Antiger, Procter and Gamble, Tubex, BSN Medical and Irish-owned companies such as Irish Sugar.

North Tipperary has not benefitted from significant foreign direct investment for many years. Throughout north Tipperary there are four international industries compared with 11 six years

ago. It is critical that a large scale positive action campaign is initiated to secure industry for the region. To achieve this, it is vital that all parties concerned, from Government to development bodies and local business groups, embark on a cohesive, focused and coordinated course of action that will result in sustainable high quality industry locating in north Tipperary. It is crucial that the full services of the investment promotion unit of Shannon Development, Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland are brought to bear in an attempt to attract the type of investment that Thurles and its hinterland deserve.

The Government must address the urgent need to create and attract high-tech, high-end jobs to Thurles and north Tipperary. To this end, it is imperative the Minister initiates a concerted and effective positive action campaign for the town and region. North Tipperary and Thurles are ideal locations for new business enterprises. Thurles is an excellent town which is well located and connected. The town enjoys an educated, vibrant and skilled workforce. It has many attributes that give it an advantage. It is time these were harnessed to provide the industries that the town and its people require.

The employment and job creation problems of north Tipperary are serious and require a specific coordinated response. I call on the Minister to act quickly with the aim of implementing proactive and positive measures to encourage and attract foreign investment to north Tipperary. It is imperative that sustainable, modern replacement industries be secured for Thurles as a matter of urgency.

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Micheál Martin): The company in question informed me last Thursday that redundancies would be taking place at its Thurles operation on a phased basis until June 2008. I am concerned about the consequences for the workers involved and their families. I wish to assure the people concerned that the Government, through the State development agencies, will provide every assistance it can. The priorities will be the workers in the company and to increase employment opportunities for Thurles and north Tipperary.

The role of FÁS, the State training agency, will be particularly important in offering assistance to the workers. The agency made contact with the company today and the full range of its services will be made available to the employees if they wish to avail of them. The company has decided to consolidate manufacturing in the parent company in the United Kingdom. This decision follows an operational review of the Thurles factory.

The development agencies will instigate a strong response. The IDA Ireland strategy for Thurles and north Tipperary involves developing the knowledge economy by winning new foreign

direct investment in innovation-driven, high skills sectors. The agency is also working with its existing company base to expand their presence in Ireland by the addition of new functions of scale and by deepening their strategic functions.

Another of the agency's strategies is to influence the provision of property solutions and the supporting infrastructure to meet the requirements of inward investors. The agency recognises the need to achieve high value employment in Thurles and is committed to marketing the area as part of its national goal of achieving balanced regional development. It has five supported companies in north Tipperary, employing some 680 people, one of which, a pharmaceutical distributor, is in Thurles. In addition, investments by two companies in Roscrea and Templemore will result in significant additional employment for the whole area including the surrounding towns.

The agency also works closely with Shannon Development in the development, promotion and marketing of tailored property solutions to potential investors throughout the mid-west, including the development of Tipperary Technology Park in Thurles. Shannon Development has completed the first stage development of Tipperary Technology Park, which includes 25,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art accommodation, to facilitate the attraction and development of knowledge-based enterprises. The park is a component of IDA Ireland's international marketing programme.

Enterprise Ireland activity in Thurles and north Tipperary is focussed on the creation of new jobs through supporting entrepreneurs setting up new high potential start-up companies and the retention and creation of jobs in existing companies. The agency also works with its clients to enhance the innovation capability of Irish companies at both national and regional levels. A significant number of Enterprise Ireland client companies in the county are actively developing their businesses.

During 2006, North Tipperary County Enterprise Board approved a total of €295,389 to 16 projects and paid out €238,850 in grant assistance to 18 projects, which resulted in the creation of 21 net jobs in CEB assisted companies throughout north Tipperary. North Tipperary CEB also organised 56 different types of training interventions during 2006, based on meeting the wide and varied needs of the small business owner-managers of north Tipperary. Some 629 participants attended training programmes run by the CEB during 2006.

The most recent data available, which is for October 2007, shows a figure of 963 on the live register, which is down from the September 2007 figure of 1,000 people. The strategies and policies pursued by the State development agencies, in partnership with other key players, are designed to ensure new employment opportunities in the Thurles and north Tipperary area. The aim is to

[Deputy Micheál Martin.]

replace the companies referred to by Deputy Lowry with the companies of tomorrow. There has been a significant churn in the economy which has been reflected in the north Tipperary area. I am conscious of the need to work with the agencies in tackling this situation. I will get back to the Deputy in the coming days to develop the coordinated and cohesive response he demanded.

Schools Building Projects.

Deputy Joan Burton: In spring during the run-up to the teacher unions' conferences and the general election, the Minister for Education and Science announced to a media fanfare that a primary school, under the patronage of the VEC, would be built for Diswellstown, Castleknock, Dublin 15. The Minister's decision was seen as an overdue response to the large number of children seeking primary school places, a consequence of the thousands of new homes built in the area and the failure of the Department of Education and Science to build a sufficient number of primary schools to meet demand. Despite her promises and the general welcome by Dublin county VEC to the proposal, it never happened. Why did the Minister run away from her promise, a belated response to a dreadful school places crisis facing parents and children? Instead, the community of Dublin 15 had an awful summer as parents jostled frantically to secure places for their children in the nearest primary school. Frantic parents and stressed children face the same situation this year.

The Minister's emergency last minute response of begging the Catholic Church to act as patron for two years or more of a new Catholic primary school, Scoil Colm, has had a predictable outcome. Scoil Colm is perceived as a school for "others", children of non-Irish parents, and is one of several primary schools in Dublin 15 where there are few or no children of Irish parents. When the children are bussed out in the morning one can see that this is a school for immigrant children. Has the Minister abandoned the VEC-patroned school for Diswellstown that she had promised? Does she have a site and has she discussed the proposal formally with the County Dublin VEC? Her inaction and cowardice in this area are leading to the development of segregated schools for non-Irish and Irish-born children of foreign immigrants. One set of parents is being pitted against another.

The Government states repeatedly that it wishes to avoid ghettoisation. Segregated schooling is the quickest route to building ghettos. Is that the Minister's intention? Fingal County Council recently announced, as requested by the Minister, a programme of school building for Dublin 15 and Fingal. Has the Minister secured the funding for this from the Minister for Finance or is this more pie in the sky? Is the promised

Diswellstown school included in this plan or has the project been dropped, as I suspect?

The Minister needs to come out of hiding and honestly address these difficult and complex issues. I have called for a new national convention on education to address the question of who will be the patrons of new schools in new areas with diverse communities, and how we provide for a different ethos, religion or other delicate issue. We want the Minister to face up to the management of primary schools in a changing Ireland. We want identified enrolment policies in primary schools that will make them inclusive rather than ghettoised. Does domestic and EU equality legislation apply in this environment and how will the Department address these issues?

School sites should be acquired when permission is granted for the building of thousands of houses and apartments. The Department should face up to its responsibilities from the day planning permission is granted, not ten years after the homes have been built and occupied. This has been the style of this Government, which puts the interests of its friends in the construction industry ahead of those of parents and children.

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey): I thank the Deputy for raising this important matter as it allows me to apprise the House of the background to, and progress in piloting, a new model of community primary school in Diswellstown.

Historically, the church authorities, mainly Catholic and Church of Ireland, acted as patrons or sponsors of primary schools by initiating the process of establishing a new school when one was needed to serve a specific geographic area. This model of school provision has evolved incrementally to reflect changes in demand and in the expectations of society, notably the demand for diversity. With these changes, there has been an increase in the number of patron bodies seeking recognition for new schools.

The present model of primary school provision has served the country well. When the Minister for Education and Science announced her intention earlier this year to pilot a new patron model for primary schools, she made it clear that this would provide an additional patronage option and was not intended to replace the existing patron models. Following her announcement, officials in the Department engaged in consultations with the education partners and the County Dublin Vocational Education Committee to explore the detailed implementation measures that must be put in place prior to the opening of the proposed new school.

The new model will be introduced on a pilot basis in the first instance at a school to be built in Diswellstown, County Dublin. It is intended that this school will be community-based and will

operate within the administrative framework of the County Dublin VEC. Once the pilot phase has been evaluated and the various issues that may arise identified and resolved, consideration can be given to allowing other VECs to establish community primary schools. Meanwhile, my Department will continue to prepare for the establishment phase for the Diswellstown school. While the exact location of the new school in Diswellstown has yet to be finalised, two potential sites are being considered and my Department has asked Fingal County Council to expedite the process as a matter of urgency.

The Department has intervened at primary level in the Dublin 15 area in response to the acknowledged need for considerable extra school places. These interventions include measures to increase the capacity of existing schools, as well as the development of new schools to meet the growing demand. The provision of increased places is, and will continue to be, backed up by a significant construction programme which has already delivered three new primary schools in the recent past, with another on site. Together with radical changes in how projects are planned and delivered, adequate primary school places in west Dublin will be ensured well into the future.

My Department is advancing plans to make considerable extra post-primary provision available in the Dublin 15 area. Four such schools will be provided in the coming years, each catering for 1,000 pupils. These schools are being provided in Phibblestown, Tyrellstown, Hansfield and Castleknock. Last Friday the Minister for Education and Science, Deputy Hanafin, officially opened the new Educate Together national school in Castleknock, Dublin 15, catering for a student population of some 400, which cost over €5 million.

My Department will liaise with the local authority and use its other information sources to ensure that whatever other school accommodation needs emerge in the Dublin 15 area will be addressed as expeditiously as possible. I thank the Deputy for raising this matter and allowing me to clarify the position on the pilot patron model and ongoing developments in the area.

Electricity Generation.

Deputy Rory O'Hanlon: I thank the Ceann Comhairle for allowing me to raise this matter, and the Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Deputy Killeen, for coming in to deal with it.

I fully support the North-South electricity interconnector. There has been a great change since the last one was put in place, which lay idle for 30 years because of the violence in Northern Ireland. We are pleased with the present level of co-operation North and South because it will ensure the supply of electricity in a growing

market and will hopefully reduce the cost. Nobody at the meetings I attended opposed this connector.

I am aware that this is primarily a matter for EirGrid, not directly for the Government. My colleague, Deputy Margaret Conlon, and I attended many meetings in County Monaghan where concern was expressed about the visual impact of the interconnector. EirGrid will consider this in the planning process under the strict guidelines of the Strategic Infrastructure Act. The issue of prime concern is health, and people were unanimous that the cable should be underground. I ask EirGrid to consider whether this is possible.

The health concerns expressed are similar to those expressed when telephone masts were erected. However, I am satisfied that there is no serious health risk regarding low frequency power lines. I believe the State bodies involved will adhere to the strict guidelines laid down by the International Commission on Non-ionising Radiation Protection, the World Health Organisation and the European Union. This does not, however, solve the problem of those who fear they are at risk.

The most important point I will make tonight relates to communication. EirGrid must communicate with all stakeholders, including those who live along the proposed routes from which one will be selected. EirGrid must contact each household and ensure people's health fears are alleviated because, while this matter poses no direct risk to one's health, lying awake at night worrying about a perceived risk could damage a person's health. I ask that EirGrid examine the possibility of running cabling underground as this would alleviate the fears of all concerned. The company must also ensure that factual information on this issue is made available to the public because there was a great deal of misinformation at the meetings we attended and many people are frightened by what is happening. It is important that these fears are dealt with and this can be done if EirGrid contacts all householders and invites them to attend explanatory meetings where the relevant information is available and people can make up their own minds.

We support this project and hope to see it proceed but would like to see it supported by local stakeholders, which can be achieved if their anxiety is alleviated.

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Tony Killeen): I thank Deputy Rory O'Hanlon for the opportunity to comment on the issue of electromagnetic radiation associated with 400kv power lines.

The Government published earlier this year the report of the expert group on the health effects of electromagnetic fields. The expert group was established by an inter-departmental committee that examined Government policy

[Deputy Tony Killeen.]

regarding the potential health effects of electromagnetic fields, EMF, with reference to the recommendations of the 2005 report of the Joint Committee on Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, titled “Non-ionising radiation from mobile phone handsets and masts”.

The report examined a wide range of issues relating to the potential health effects of electromagnetic fields, including those produced by mobile telecommunications. It answers many questions commonly raised by the public regarding the health effects of electromagnetic fields and can be downloaded from the Department’s website, www.environ.ie.

With regard to extremely low frequency, ELF, fields emitted by electricity power lines, including 400kv power lines, the report concluded that there is limited scientific evidence of adverse health effects. The expert group has recommended that precautionary measures be used where appropriate and that Ireland continue to adopt and enforce the international guidelines developed by the International Commission on Non-ionising Radiation Protection and endorsed by the World Health Organisation and the European Union. For example, where possible new power lines should be sited away from heavily populated areas and where major new power lines are to be constructed there should be stakeholder input on the routing.

The Government also decided that the responsibilities of the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources regarding the health effects of EMF would become the responsibility of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government from 1 May 2007. Furthermore, it was decided that a single State agency should be established to deal both with ionising radiation and non-ionising radiation. This will be achieved by extending the statutory powers of the Radiological Protection

Institute of Ireland to include responsibility for matters relating to non-ionising radiation. The details of implementation of the new mandate for the RPII will be presented to Government for approval in due course by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, following detailed consultation with other relevant Government Departments and agencies.

The Government has also agreed to establish a national research programme to undertake further scientific research in Ireland on the health effects of exposure to EMF. This research programme will build expertise in Ireland and contribute to global knowledge.

With regard to the planning aspect of power lines, section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 provides planning authorities with the discretionary power to grant planning permission, subject to conditions as appropriate, to the individual project. Under the Strategic Infrastructure Act 2006 An Bord Pleanála has powers to attach conditions in respect of applications made to it under the new strategic consent process. With regard to electricity transmission lines specifically, this means that planning authorities and the board already have powers to require that power lines be placed underground if, for example, they are in close proximity to inhabited dwellings or exceed a particular voltage.

The interpretation and implementation of planning legislation is a matter for the planning authority concerned in each case and ultimately for the courts. However, the legislation sets out that in making decisions on planning applications planning authorities must consider the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, having regard to the provisions of the development plan, any submissions or observations received and relevant ministerial or Government policies.

The Dáil adjourned at 9.10 p.m. until 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 14 November 2007.

Written Answers.

The following are questions tabled by Members for written response and the ministerial replies as received on the day from the Departments [unrevised].

Questions Nos. 1 to 9, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 10 to 43, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 44 to 53, inclusive, answered orally.

Psychological Service.

54. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Science if her attention has been drawn to the fact that there are only 127 educational psychologists serving more than 800,000 students, with only half of existing primary and secondary schools having access to such services; if her Department has plans to properly fund the provision of extra psychologists in order to curb the high rate of ADHD, depression and suicide among young people; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28453/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Deputy will, I'm sure, be aware that all primary and post primary schools have access to psychological assessments either directly through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) or through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA). Schools that do not currently have NEPS psychologists assigned to them may avail of the SCPA and have an assessment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved and paid for by NEPS. The prioritisation of urgent cases for assessment is a matter for the school principal in the first instance.

The Deputy will also be aware that since NEPS was established, we have trebled the number of psychologists in the service. Notwithstanding this and as I have previously announced my Department is committed to increasing psychological service staffing further, so that by 2009 there will be 200 NEPS psychologists. To this end I can

inform the Deputy that my Department has been working, in conjunction with the Public Appointments Commission to recruit new psychologists from an existing panel to the service.

The number of psychologists as of April 2007 stood at 128 including 4 assigned to the National Behavioural Support Service and to the Further Education Service. Since then nine individuals have been appointed in this regard. This advance in numbers has been reduced somewhat by the effects of resignations and retirement and the compliment in service currently stands at 134. Three further psychologists are due to join NEPS under this process between now and early January 2008.

The panel concerned is now exhausted and the Public Appointments Service has recently announced the commencement of a competition from which a new panel will be drawn to continue the recruitment process. The deadline for receipt of applications in this regard has now passed and work is proceeding on the short-listing of candidates for interview. It is envisaged that the process will be completed and panels formed by the end of next month allowing recruitment to recommence early in 2008. My Department remains committed to the development of a strong and robust educational psychological service serving the needs of all primary and post-primary pupils.

The occurrence of ADHD and Depression amongst young people a serious issue which falls, in the first instance, into the province of clinical diagnosis and treatment by the appropriate health professionals. However schools fulfil an important role in this regard especially in terms of prevention. Such prevention needs to be addressed at whole school level through provision of relevant curricula for all children, through effective implementation of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme, and through the provision of the supports afforded by a good care system, including the capacity to

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

respond appropriately to early signs of difficulty. The development of self-esteem, general coping skills and personal effectiveness is the most appropriate way to help the general population of young people to deal with life pressures and stress. SPHE is now a compulsory subject both at primary level and in the junior cycle of post primary schools.

All post-primary schools have an ex-quota allocation for guidance and counselling provision. Qualified guidance counsellors are trained to provide counselling support to students and the guidance programme seeks to equip students with self management skills and encourages students to seek help during times of stress. Where children exhibit symptoms teachers, tutors, guidance counsellors, home school liaison co-ordinators and the services of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) can all play an important role in this respect and where necessary make referral to the appropriate health agencies for definitive diagnosis and treatment.

School Curriculum.

55. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to her reply to Parliamentary Question No. 131 of 2 October 2007, if relationships and sexual education as part of the SPHE curriculum will be mandatory at primary level; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28464/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The reply of 2 October 2007 dealt with the issue of implementation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in second level schools. The content of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum for primary schools was developed as part of the revised Primary Curriculum which has been implemented on a phased basis over the period to 1999 to 2007. Social Personal and Health Education has been part of the national curriculum in all primary schools since September 2003. It is delivered to children at all levels from infants upwards. It provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the individual child, to help the child to create and maintain supportive relationships and to become an active responsible citizen in society.

The curriculum is built around 3 strands – Myself, Myself and Others, and Myself and the Wider world, and deals with issues such as making decisions, developing self confidence, growing and changing, personal safety, relating to friends, family and others, handling conflict, respecting difference and awareness of bullying. Issues such as knowing about and taking care of one's body, feelings and emotions, the onset of puberty, reproduction, decision making skills, staying safe, realising when and how to get help are dealt with. The content of relationships and sexuality edu-

cation is embedded in the programme in an age appropriate way for the different class groupings.

All primary schools are required to implement all aspects of the curriculum. A report on Phase 1 of the evaluation of implementation of the revised primary curriculum was published in 2005 focusing on English, Mathematics and Visual Arts. A Phase 2 evaluation is now under way focusing on Gaeilge, Science and Social Personal and Health Education. This will evaluate the implementation of the SPHE curriculum in schools, and review the effectiveness of the delivery of the RSE components within the curriculum.

The evaluation methodology includes a review of school and classroom planning documentation in relation to SPHE, visits to classrooms to observe teaching and learning SPHE, a questionnaire for pupils and a questionnaire to parents. The evaluation visits to the schools concerned have taken place and the final phase of data collection and analysis will take place in the coming months. It is expected that the report of the evaluation will be published in summer 2008.

Schools Building Projects.

56. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to her reply to Parliamentary Question No. 102 of 2 October 2007, the progress that has been made in relation to the establishment of the developing areas unit as promised in the programme for Government; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28480/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): As the Deputy will be aware, my Department has been prioritising developing areas for investment under the School Building and Modernisation Programme. During the period of the last National Development Plan 2000-2006, record levels of investment and the streamlining of delivery systems allowed a major acceleration of the school building programme. Over €2.6 billion was invested in upgrading existing school infrastructure and providing new school accommodation at both first and second-level. This was the largest investment programme in the history of the State and delivered over 7,800 building projects involving tens of thousands of extra permanent school places.

Innovations in the delivery of school buildings such as Generic Repeat Designs and the use of the Design and Build model have been introduced to ensure that new school buildings are delivered in the fastest time-frame possible. Much greater authority has also been devolved to local school management boards to manage and deliver smaller building projects, thereby freeing my Department to concentrate on the larger scale projects. We have also improved forward planning through greater cooperation with Local Authorities and the publication of 10-year Area

Development Plans. All of these developments have facilitated the provision of extra school places in extensions and new schools in developing areas all over the country.

The budget for 2007 is the first year of the roll out of the National Development Plan 2007-2013 which will involve an investment of over €4.5 billion in school buildings. This funding will enable my Department to continue to take a proactive approach to the provision of modern school accommodation particularly in developing areas. We are planning for an expected 100,000 additional school places over the lifetime of the Plan. This year alone around over €540 million will be spent on school building infrastructure with over 1,500 projects on my Department's school building programme. Construction in 2007 alone will deliver over 700 classrooms to provide permanent accommodation for over 17,500 pupils, mainly in developing areas.

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to establish a Developing Areas Unit in my Department, dedicated solely to progressing school planning in rapidly developing areas, building on improvements that have already been made in recent years. I should point out that my Department's school planning section has been organised on a geographical basis for some time, with staff dedicated to planning for the needs of counties such as Dublin, Meath and Kildare which include rapidly developing areas. The developing areas unit will consolidate this work. In advance of the full establishment of the unit, some staff have already been redeployed to focus on its priority work, including the need for extra accommodation for September 2008. Discussions are ongoing with the Department of Finance in relation to the additional staffing required to resource this new unit for its longer term work programme.

As part of our strategy for the provision of school places for 2008 and onwards my Department has also initiated a tender process for a drawdown contract facility that will be used to provide additional school places in the rapidly developing areas. This drawdown contract facility is aimed at providing school accommodation in very short timescales using modern methodologies such as off-site construction. Both I and my senior officials have met with the relevant local authorities in relation to the acquisition of suitable sites for new schools and, where possible, pre-empting any planning issues that may arise. This close cooperation with local authorities will help ensure that additional school places are provided in the developing areas within the earliest possible timeframes.

Early School Leavers.

57. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science if her Department is notified, on a regular and structured basis, by secondary school authorities of the numbers of young

persons including their name, address and PPS number who drop out of secondary school before taking the junior certificate examination or who have not reached the age of 16; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28452/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): My Department is notified annually of the details of all pupils attending post primary schools. This information is provided by each school via the October return and is used for a number of purposes, including the production of statistics on the retention of pupils in the post primary school system. In addition to this the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, places an obligation on schools to report on school attendance to the National Educational Welfare Board. Schools are asked to submit information about individual student absences under various categories including students who drop out of school.

My Department has adopted a broad-based approach to tackling early school leaving. We established the National Educational Welfare Board to monitor attendance and help to get young people back to school. The Board runs promotional campaigns on the importance of attendance and finishing school and provides a service locally through its Education Welfare Officers to parents, children and schools. It is encouraging to note research findings that attendance at school in the areas where EWOs are working intensively improved by 4% in 2004/05 compared with the previous year.

My Department is also currently implementing DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) an action plan for educational inclusion. DEIS is an integrated educational inclusion strategy developed for 3-18 year olds and represents a shift in emphasis away from individual initiatives, each addressing particular problems to a multi-faceted and more integrated approach. In addition to the NEWB there are some 620 staff, within the education sector, deployed in education disadvantage programmes of which over 130 are additional posts allocated under DEIS. The School Completion Programme and the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) are preventative measures designed to combat issues of poor attendance and early school leaving. Children at risk of early school leaving are targeted under the School Completion Programme for a variety of extra supports aimed at encouraging them to stay in school. The supports cover both educational and non-educational interventions and are provided during and outside of school time. The Home School Community Liaison Scheme works to involve parents in their children's education which is a crucial component in convincing young people of the value of education.

Other measures facilitated through the DEIS action plan include extending access to Schools' Business Partnerships, school meals, guidance counselling and student councils. Increased inte-

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

gration is also being promoted between the work of second-level schools and centres catering for young early school leavers, particularly Youthreach centres and Senior Traveller Training centres. The range of curricula available to students has also been extended to include the Junior Certificate Schools Programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. These options provide an alternative for many children who might otherwise opt out of formal education at an early stage.

This Government has shown a sustained commitment to providing greater opportunities in the further education sector by supporting second chance educational opportunities for young people who leave school. Many of these young people take up places in Youthreach centres, while others pursue options such as FAS apprenticeships. In line with the commitment in *Towards 2016* we have already created 400 of the additional 1000 Youthreach places to be put in place by 2009. A further measure to combat the contributing factor of poor behaviour on early school leaving was to put in place the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS). Fifty schools were identified to receive support and the NBSS is working intensively with these schools. An allocation of €8million has been provided in 2007 to support the work of the NBSS to help schools promote positive student behaviour at second level.

School Staffing.

58. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to her reply to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 125, 150 and 158 of 2 October 2007, the number of teachers hired since 2004; the number of teachers who have retired since 2004; if the figure includes classroom assistants, laboratory technicians or special needs assistants; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28460/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): 3,761 more teachers were employed in primary schools in September 2007 than in September 2004. The allocation of these additional posts improved the pupil teacher ratio from 17.44 in the 2003/2004 school year to 16.41 in the 2006/2007 school year. The additional posts allocated at primary level have been used for

- improvements to the staffing schedule to ensure that all primary schools are staffed on the basis of a general rule of at least one classroom teacher for every 27 children in the current school year, down from 1 for every 29 two years ago.
- the appointment of administrative principals for schools with Principal and four or five mainstream teachers which also has a specialist autism unit;

- the appointment of deputy administrative principals;
- allocation of resource teacher posts to either individual schools or to a cluster of schools where a need has been identified;
- the introduction of the General Allocation model for deploying learning support/resource teachers in September, 2005 and the allocation of additional learning support/resource teachers;
- reducing class sizes under the disadvantaged initiatives;
- the allocation of teaching posts to schools where 14 or more pupils with significant English language needs are identified;
- improvements in the criteria for the allocation of teaching posts to developing schools; and

119 additional teacher equivalents have been employed in Secondary and Community/ Comprehensive schools and additional 463 whole time teacher equivalents employed in VECs between 2004 and 2007. It should be noted that the number of second level students decreased over the period and that there was one teacher for almost every 13 post-primary pupils in the 2006/07 school year. There were 463 additional WTE teachers for mainstream and PLCs allocated to the VEC sector in that period. 2,732 more special needs assistants were employed in primary schools in September 2007 than in September 2004, while 1,080 more were employed in post-primary schools including Vocational Education Committees.

2,709 primary teachers retired between 2004 and 2007. 2,311 teachers employed in Secondary and Community/ Comprehensive schools also retired. I regret that I do not have the information regarding the numbers of retirees in Vocational Education Committees as it is only available from the individual committees. The numbers of increased posts that I have outlined above are in addition to replacements for the numbers that retired over the period.

Library Service.

59. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to her reply to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 501 and 502 of 6 March 2007, the system used to count or measure for the library grant which is based on the number of pupils enrolled in primary schools in each local authority area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28472/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): At primary level it is a matter for each Local Authority to provide a library service for schools in its area. While my Department has no involvement in the actual operation of this service, it does make a grant available to each

Local Authority on an annual basis to enable Local Authority Librarians select, purchase, and deliver books to the primary schools in its area. The grant is based on the number of pupils enrolled in primary schools in each Local Authority area.

Enrolment data is based on the Annual Primary School Census which provides information on the enrolment and staffing of all schools at the last Friday in September of each year. This information forms the basis for how the Department provides teachers and grants to schools and is also the basis on which library grants are made to Local Authorities. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the provision in respect of library grants has been increased from €1.5 million in 2004 to €2.118 million in 2007, an increase of more than 40% since 2004. The question of increasing the provision in the future will be considered in the context of available resources and priorities within the education sector.

Schools Recognition.

60. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Education and Science if, with reference to her press statement of 17 February 2007 announcing her plans to establish Diswellstown Community National School, it is still her position that no other VEC primary schools will be recognised until the initial pilot school is evaluated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27178/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Historically, the church authorities (mainly Catholic and Church of Ireland) acted as patrons or sponsors of primary schools by initiating the process of establishing a new school when one was needed to serve a specific geographic area. This model of school provision has been incrementally evolving to reflect changes in demand and in the expectations of society, notably the demand for diversity. With these changes, there has been an increase in the number of patron bodies seeking recognition for new schools.

The present model of primary school provision has served the country well. When I announced my intention earlier this year to pilot a new patron model for primary schools, I made it clear that this would provide an additional patronage option and is not intended to serve as a replacement of the existing patron models. The new model will be introduced on a pilot basis in the first instance at a school to be built in Diswellstown, Co Dublin. It is intended that this school will be community-based and will operate within the administrative framework of the County Dublin Vocational Education Committee.

Following my announcement, officials in my Department engaged in consultations with the education partners and the County Dublin

Vocational Education Committee to explore the detailed implementation measures that will need to be put in place prior to the opening of the proposed new school. The proposal to pilot the new model has been broadly welcomed by the partners. Pending the completion of the consultation process and the evaluation of the pilot phase, I decided as a matter of policy that no vocational education committee (with the exception of the pilot project within the administrative area of the County Dublin Vocational Education Committee) should act as a patron in respect of a primary school or otherwise establish or maintain a primary school.

I therefore directed all Vocational Education Committees not to establish or maintain a primary school and not to seek recognition of a primary school until further notice from my Department. The purpose of this direction was to ensure that all aspects of the establishment process were given careful consideration before the model was adopted at national level. I was especially anxious to avoid a situation whereby different Vocational Education Committees might inadvertently adopt varying and possibly contradictory approaches to what is a very complex area. Once the pilot phase has been fully evaluated and the various issues that may arise have been identified and resolved, consideration can be given to allowing other Vocational Education Committees to establish community primary schools. In the meantime, my Department will continue with the preparatory work in advance of the establishment phase for the Diswellstown school.

Schools Building Projects.

61. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Science the steps she will take to ensure the completion of the 13 new schools by September 2008, in rapidly growing communities throughout the country; the projected cost of these projects; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28242/07]

68. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Science the projected cost of the 13 new schools to be built by September 2008, in rapidly growing communities throughout the country; the projected cost of these projects; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28241/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 61 and 68 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, my Department has been prioritising developing areas for investment under the School Building and Modernisation Programme. During the period of the last National Development Plan 2000-2006, record levels of investment and the streamlining of delivery systems allowed a major acceleration of the

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

school building programme. Over €2.6 billion was invested in upgrading existing school infrastructure and providing new school accommodation at both first and second-level. This was the largest investment programme in the history of the State and delivered over 7,800 building projects involving tens of thousands of extra permanent school places. This investment has helped to increase capacity and transform the standard of accommodation in many schools throughout the country.

Innovations in the delivery of school buildings such as Generic Repeat Designs and the use of the Design and Build model have been introduced to ensure that new school buildings are delivered in the fastest time-frame possible. Much greater authority has also been devolved to local school management boards to manage and deliver smaller building projects, thereby freeing my Department to concentrate on the larger scale projects. We have also improved forward planning through greater cooperation with Local Authorities and the publication of 10-year Area Development Plans.

The budget for 2007 is the first year of the roll out of the National Development Plan 2007-2013 which will involve an investment of over €4.5 billion in school buildings. This funding will enable my Department to continue to take a proactive approach to the provision of modern school accommodation particularly in developing areas. We are planning for an expected 100,000 additional school places over the lifetime of the Plan. This year alone over €540 million will be spent on school building infrastructure with over 1,500 projects on my Department's school building programme. Construction in 2007 alone will deliver over 700 classrooms to provide permanent accommodation for over 17,500 pupils, mainly in developing areas.

As part of our strategy for the provision of school places for 2008 and onwards my Department has also initiated a tender process for a drawdown contract facility that will be used to provide additional school places in the rapidly developing areas. This drawdown contract facility is aimed at providing school accommodation in very short timescales using modern methodologies such as off-site construction. My Department is also working closely with the relevant local authorities in relation to the acquisition of suitable sites for new schools and, where possible, pre-empting any planning issues that may arise. In order to ensure that the public procurement process is not compromised it is not my Department's policy to provide cost information on individual projects. However, the Deputy can be assured that my Department will target funding, as appropriate, in order to ensure that additional school accommodation is provided in developing areas within the earliest possible timeframes.

Special Educational Needs.

62. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to Parliamentary Question No. 550 of 6 February 2007, when the Special Education Appeals Board will become operational; the remaining sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 which have to be fully implemented; the time-scale for same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28461/07]

63. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Education and Science the estimated number of school children with special educational needs; the number who have applied for assessment under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004; the number who have received assessment; the number of these who have received individual education plans as a result; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28462/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 62 and 63 together.

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 was enacted in July 2004. The Special Education Appeals Board (SEAB) was established under section 36 of the EPSEN Act to hear and determine appeals pursuant to a number of sections of the Act. Members of the inaugural appeals board have been appointed and are currently working on the development of processes and procedures which need to be in place before the relevant sections of the Act, which provide for appeals, are commenced. The following sections have been commenced:- 1, 2, 14(1)(a), 14(1)(c), 14(2) to 14(4), 19 to 37, 40 to 44, 45-49 and 50 to 53. The remaining sections have not yet been commenced.

As the EPSEN Act does not provide for phased commencement by age cohort the education sector must be in a position to provide the required services to all children before the relevant provisions are commenced. My Department's priority, therefore, has been to put in place the resources required for children with special educational needs and to ensure that the necessary supports are in place to facilitate the commencement of the remaining sections of the EPSEN Act. At primary level, there are now over 6,000 teachers working directly with children with special educational needs compared with fewer than 1,500 in 1998. At post primary level, over 2,450 whole-time equivalent teachers support special needs students compared with 200 in 1998. The number of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) has increased from 300 in 1998 to over 8,800 in 2007 and the amount allocated for assistive technology has increased from less than €1m in 1998 to €3m in 2007.

The National Council for Special Education was required by the legislation to advise on

implementation of the Act. My Department has been examining the Council's advice and in this connection has held a series of consultations with the education partners on implementation issues. Arising from this process my Department is developing proposals for the implementation of the Act. It is hoped to complete this work shortly. At the same time my Department continues to provide for the allocation of additional resources through the Council to enhance the capacity of the education system to meet special educational needs.

My Department has also been collaborating with the Department of Health and Children, the National Council for Special Education and the Health Service Executive to ensure that the implementation of the EPSEN and Disability Acts are progressed in a co-ordinated manner. To this end a Cross Sectoral Group representative of officials from the education and health sectors has been established to progress the work in these areas.

There are varying estimates of the number of children with special educational needs. The National Council for Special Education is currently compiling data on children in respect of whom resources have been allocated and has also indicated that it proposes to strengthen the area of prevalence data. My Department will support the Council's efforts in this regard. As outlined above, the sections of the EPSEN Act in respect of assessments and individual education plans have not yet commenced. However as already stated services continue to be provided to children with special educational needs on a non-statutory basis.

School Enrolments.

64. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Science if her Department is making provision to provide more school places for pupils entering the primary school system in 2012 in view of the recent report (details supplied) that highlighted that Ireland's birth rate is expected to increase by 11% compared to 2006; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28454/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The annual total of births in Ireland has been increasing since 1995. As a direct consequence of this, enrolments at Primary level have been increasing since 2001/02 and are projected to continue increasing for the foreseeable future. Inward migration is another factor pushing up enrolment at both primary and second level in recent years together with an underlying increase in participation — especially beyond the compulsory school-leaving age.

While any projection into the future is tentative and dependent on many factors that are not subject to policy control or absolute confirmation, it is highly probable that enrolment at primary level will increase by at least 20% over the coming dec-

ade. That implies an increase on last year's level of 458,000 pupils at primary level to approximately 555,000 in 2015/16. In other words, enrolment will regain the level recorded in 1989 by the year 2015.

To deal with this increasing demand for school places, the Government is providing funding of €4.5 billion over the lifetime of the new National Development Plan (NDP). This will be the largest investment programme in schools in the history of the State and it will enable my Department to ensure that school places are available where needed as well as continuing to upgrade existing school facilities. This investment will allow my Department to continue the school building programme which commenced during the life time of the last NDP when well over €2.6 billion was invested in school development, delivering over 7,800 projects.

The budget for 2007 is the first year of the roll out of the new NDP. This funding will enable my Department to continue to provide modern school accommodation on an on-going basis, particularly in developing areas. This year alone around over €540 million will be spent on school building infrastructure with over 1,500 projects on my Department's school building programme. Construction in 2007 alone will deliver over 700 classrooms to provide permanent accommodation for over 17,500 pupils, mainly in developing areas.

Innovations in the delivery of school buildings such as Generic Repeat Designs and the use of the Design and Build model ensure that new school buildings are delivered in the fastest time-frame possible. My Department has also adopted a policy of devolving much greater authority to local school management boards to manage and deliver smaller building projects, thereby freeing the Department to concentrate on the larger scale projects. My Department has also improved forward planning through greater cooperation between it and Local Authorities and the publication of Area Development Plans.

The main focus of the school building programme is to deliver additional capacity in the rapidly developing areas. It is projected that 100,000 additional school places will be required over the next number of years. I am conscious of the need to provide more school places quickly and these are being delivered. As part of our strategy for the provision of school places for 2008 and onwards my Department has also initiated a tender process for a drawdown contract facility that will be used to provide additional school places in the rapidly developing areas. This drawdown contract facility is aimed at providing school accommodation in very short timescales using modern methodologies such as off-site construction. Both I and my senior officials have met with the relevant local authorities in relation to the acquisition of suitable sites for new schools and, where possible, pre-empting any planning issues that may arise. This close cooperation with

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

local authorities will help ensure that additional school places are provided in the developing areas within the earliest possible timeframes.

Schools Building Projects.

65. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to Parliamentary Question No. 119 of 2 October 2007, the exact number, name and location of the schools who are in receipt of the €3 billion plus that has been invested by her Department since 2000 as part of the upgrading of existing school infrastructure and new school accommodation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28455/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Deputy will be aware from my previous reply that this €3 billion investment delivered over 9,000 projects in schools throughout the country over the last 7 years. This investment has significantly increased capacity and transformed the standard of accommodation in many schools. Given the scale of investment and the number of projects involved it would require an inordinate amount of staff time to assemble the requested information. However, if the Deputy wishes to clarify the situation in respect of investment in individual cases then I would be happy to provide her with the information.

Third Level Fees.

66. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Education and Science the fee scales which a non-EU national is charged for entry to first year medicine in each third level education institute; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28489/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The setting of fees for non-EU nationals attending medical schools, and other higher education courses, is a matter for the institutions themselves. I understand that, at present, the annual fees are approximately €28,000 in the public higher education institutions. The Government supports the internationalisation of Irish education services and, in 2004, accepted the Report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on the Internationalisation of Irish Education Services.

Scéimeanna Tógála Scoile.

67. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dinny McGinley** den Aire Oideachais agus Eolaíochta an bhfuil iarratas ina Roinn le haghaidh scoil úr (sonraí tugtha) a thógáil a bhfuil suíomh faighte agus ceannaithe di; céard é méid na scoile úire atá i gceist; cén staid ag a bhfuil an plan faoi láthair; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [28437/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Tá iarrtha ar Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí, a fheidhmíonn thar ceann mo Roinne go ginearálta maidir le fáil suíomhanna do scoileanna, suíomh a aimsiú do Scoil Náisiúnta Ghort a' Choirce. Tá suíomh oiriúnach tar éis a shainitheanta agus tá fáil an tsuímh ag staid tíolactha. Machnófar comhaontas chun dul isteach i gconradh do cheannach an tsuímh seo i gcomhthéacs bhuiséad na Roinne d'fháil suíomhanna i 2008, rud atá fós le tabhairt chun críche.

Question No. 68 answered with Question No. 61.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio.

69. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the extent to which class sizes have been reduced since the beginning of the 2007/08 school year as compared with the previous year; the extent to which the highest class sizes have been reduced and the amount of same; the extent to which she expects to improve on this situation by the end of 2007/08 school year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28448/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The information on class sizes for the 2007/08 school year is currently being compiled in my Department. As the Deputy will be aware, major improvements have been made in staffing at primary level in recent years. There are now 5,000 more primary teachers than there were in 2002. By the 2006/07 school year, we had reduced the average class size in our primary schools to 24, while the pupil teacher ratio was 16.4:1, including resource teachers etc. In that year, schools were staffed on the basis of a general rule of at least one classroom teacher for every 28 children. Given that the national average was 24, many schools benefited from much more favourable staffing ratios than this.

Extra teachers were provided by the Government for the 2007/08 school year to improve primary school staffing so that schools would generally get at least one classroom teacher for every 27 children. A further initiative in recent years that has been of direct benefit to primary schools has been the change in the criteria for developing schools. For the current school year the threshold for getting a developing school post was reduced specifically to help schools that are seeing large increases in enrolments each year. Over 330 such posts have been sanctioned in the 2007/08 school year compared to 280 in 2006/07.

The improvements we have made in school staffing in recent years are absolutely unparalleled. The Government is committed to providing more teachers to our primary schools over the next five years in order to reduce class sizes. We will also continue our focus on measures to improve the quality of education in our primary

schools to ensure that increased resources lead to better outcomes for our children.

Adult Education.

70. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to a previous parliamentary question, if the expenditure on adult literacy has been increased to €30 million in 2007 as promised; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28471/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I have provided an increase in funding of €7.4 million, or 21% on 2006, this year for Adult Literacy and Community Education. It will bring expenditure on adult Literacy up to €30 million this year, and will allow for the provision of 3,000 additional literacy places, as set out in the Programme for Government. Adult Literacy and Basic Education are my top priority in Adult Education. Significant progress has been made, and continues to be made, in addressing the needs of adults with low levels of literacy. I will continue to address the needs of these learners as resources permit.

Student Support Services.

71. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Minister for Education and Science the specific resources available to third level institutions to fund on-campus medical and counselling facilities for students; if she will provide specific funding for such facilities in the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28476/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The position is that the third level institutions are autonomous institutions and my Department does not have any function in their day to day operational affairs. The Universities and Institutes of Technology receive a block grant from the Higher Education Authority and it is a matter for each institution to determine how it is allocated internally.

Third level Institutions have a Student Services Charge which is currently €825 per annum per student. This charge is levied by the institutions to defray the costs of examinations, registration and student services such as that referred to by the Deputy. All students who are eligible for a means tested student support grant have the student charge paid on their behalf by the Local Authorities or the Vocational Education Committees, in addition to any maintenance grant and tuition fee grant to which they are entitled.

Student Visas.

72. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Science if her attention has been drawn to the recent reports (details supplied) which state that non-EU secondary

school students, whose parents reside here on student visas, are being removed without notice from the Garda National Immigration Bureau from schools they are attending thus being forced to enroll in fee paying schools or return to their native homelands; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28481/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Existing education policy is that students up to 18 years of age are admitted to primary and second level schools irrespective of their nationality or status. Indeed, under the Equal Status Act, schools may not discriminate in admission to schools except where this is necessary to maintain the religious values or ethos of the school. While the Act does provide for differential treatment in relation to fees for further and higher education for persons who are not nationals of an EU Member State, there is no such condition specified in regard to second level schools.

The admission of persons to the State from outside the EU is a matter for the immigration authorities. Children of refugees, those with humanitarian leave to remain in the State, and asylum seekers are entitled to access free first and second level education. However, the basic conditions for a student visa require that the student attend a full time programme of education and training, and be financially self supporting. The Report on the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Internationalisation of Irish Education, published in 2004, set out a strategy with the objective of enhancing the attractiveness of Ireland as a quality venue for international students and increasing the numbers of students coming to Ireland to participate in further and higher education and training and in the language sector. It was envisaged that students from outside the EU/EEA and Switzerland, other than refugees and those with humanitarian leave to remain in the State, would participate on a fee paying basis.

In the course of the discussions leading to the Report, the position of minors attending school for second level education was discussed, and the existing immigration policy that student visas should be allowed only in respect of attendance at fee-paying schools was confirmed, on the basis that to do otherwise would give rise to additional demands on the State. In overall discussions with the immigration authorities in regard to student visas at second level, my Department has made clear the requirements under the Equal Status Act, has stressed the need to take due account of the age and vulnerability of children who, while having no entitlement to remain in the State, may already be enrolled in schools in the Free Education Scheme, and the importance of completion of second level education to future life chances.

Health and Safety Issues.

73. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the

[Deputy Thomas P. Broughan.]

Minister for Education and Science the plans she has to introduce measures that will encourage more students to walk to school or encourage a car pooling system to combat the congestion on Irish roads every school day; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28465/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The question of whether children walk to and from school or are driven as part of a car pooling initiative is a matter for decision by their parents. However, it is clear that walking to school can make an important contribution to children's health and to developing their sense of road safety as well as decreasing traffic congestion around school routes. Many local authorities have developed schemes to encourage walking to school, through initiatives such as the organisation of a 'walking bus', the provision of school traffic wardens, the organisation of Walk to School Weeks, and the development of 'park and stride' initiatives. Local authorities are also involved in promoting car pooling initiatives.

An Taisce's Green Schools Initiative includes initiatives such as the Safer Routes to School Project which aims to increase the number of children who walk and cycle, increase the number of families who 'park and stride' or 'carpool', and reduce school-related congestion. The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme in all primary schools includes a specific 'safety and protection' strand which is designed to develop in children an increasing sense of personal responsibility for their own safety and that of others. The learning objectives of this strand specifically include such issues as safety strategies for crossing the road, using the bus or being a pedestrian, crossing the road with an adult, and being familiar with the rules for travelling in a car or bus, or on a bicycle.

SPHE is also a mandatory junior cycle subject at second-level. The SPHE curriculum at both primary level and in the junior cycle at second-level stresses the importance of daily exercise and a healthy diet to maintaining health and well being. The 'personal safety' strand of the junior cycle programme includes such issues as road safety and is supported by a range of curriculum materials. In addition, a road safety programme for use in Transition Year has been developed and is currently being piloted by the Road Safety Authority in collaboration with my Department, the NCCA and the Second Level Support Service.

In addition school transport services are operated by Bus Éireann on behalf my Department. Some 135,000 children are carried annually under the scheme, of which 8,500 are children with special needs. Transport is provided by Bus Éireann and private providers with a mix of large, medium and minibuses, as well as a number of car taxis. One of the effects of provision on this scale is to lessen the amount of children being

transported to school in cars. The Department of Transport has also begun the process of developing a Sustainable Travel and Transport Action Plan, which the Government is committed to publishing in the Spring of 2008. My Department is represented on the Steering Group set up to oversee the development of the plan, and the plan will specifically address the issues relating to children travelling to and from school.

Finally, in February of this year, the Road Safety Authority launched the RSA MACE "Safe to School" campaign at primary level, which is aimed at helping primary school children learn effective road safety lessons. The first part of this campaign is about walking to school safely and as part of this initiative educational packs and DVDs have been distributed to all primary schools and a Walking to School Guide has been produced. A dedicated website, www.safetoschool.ie, has also been launched as part of the campaign.

Halla Spóirt.

74. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dinny McGinley** den Aire Oideachais agus Eolaíochta an bhfuil cinneadh déanta halla spóirt a chur ar fáil ag scoil (sonraí tugtha) a bhfuil airgead curtha ar fáil don tionscnamh, cén staid ag a bhfuil an phlean faoi láthair; cén uair a bheidh tús á chur leis an obair; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [28436/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Tá tionscadal tograithe an Halla Corpoideachais ag Staid 4/5 (dearadh mionsonrach/Bille Cainteoir). Chuir an Fhoireann Deartha freagra faoi bhráid ar roinnt fiafraíthe faoin dtionscadal a chuir an Roinn le déanaí ach measadh an freagra a bheith neamhionlán. Tá doiciméadú leasaithe iarrtha ag mo Roinnse agus tabharfar a thuilleadh aire don tionscadal seo tar éis don doiciméadú seo a bheith faighte.

Student Support Schemes.

75. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Minister for Education and Science if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the average cost of rented accommodation for students in Dublin city centre is €600 per month and that the grant system forces many students to seek part-time work to support themselves, thus not giving adequate attention to their studies; if she will include a speedy, efficient, centralised grant system in the forthcoming Student Support Bill; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28486/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): As the Deputy may be aware, I secured approval for a 10% increase in the standard rate of student grant for the academic year 2007/08. This very substantial increase, at twice

the rate of inflation, will assist in meeting the costs associated with attending higher and further education for over 56,000 students who receive a maintenance grant. This has resulted in an increase in the maximum rate of ordinary grant to €3,420 for 2007/08 and students who qualify will also have the student service charge paid on their behalf. In addition, over 12,500 students in receipt of the Special Rate of maintenance grant have benefited from an even more substantial increase of over 14%, with the maximum rate for 2007/08 increasing to €6,690.

I plan to introduce a single unified scheme of maintenance grants for students and to consolidate the administration of this unified grants scheme in the VEC sector. This will, I believe, provide for a more coherent administrative system. The scheme, which will be underpinned by a new Student Support Bill, will facilitate consistency of application, improved client accessibility and timely delivery of grants. The Student Support Bill is at an advanced stage of preparation, and I hope to be in a position to publish it shortly.

Grant Payments.

76. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of grants made to schools under the school building and school support programmes during each year from 2002 to date in 2007 for Dublin city, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown, south Dublin and Fingal; the value of such grants in each year and in each area mentioned. [28477/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The information requested relating to capital grants paid to schools is not available in the format sought by the Deputy. The Deputy's reference to school support programmes lacks specificity with the result that the information cannot be provided. In recent years, it has been the practice of my Department to annually publish details of all projects that are included in the School Building Programme. These details are available on my Department's website at www.education.ie.

School Catchment Areas.

77. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Science her views on whether the present school catchment area boundaries are in many cases archaic and giving rise to injustice; and the time-frame in these circumstances for the completion of a review thereof. [28221/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Catchment boundaries have their origins in the establishment of free post-primary education in the late 1960's and were determined following consultation with local educational interests. For planning purposes the country was divided into geographic districts each with several

primary schools feeding into a post-primary centre with one or more post-primary schools. The intention was that these defined districts would facilitate the orderly planning of school provision and accommodation needs. The Programme for Government provides for a review of the school transport scheme, including catchment boundaries, to be carried out. My Department is currently considering how this review should best be undertaken.

School Staffing.

78. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to her reply to Parliamentary Question No. 491 of 6 March 2007, the number of primary schools with access to a qualified physical education teacher; the number of secondary schools which employ at least one qualified PE teacher full-time; the number of primary schools that do not have access to a qualified PE teacher; the number of secondary schools that do not employ a qualified PE teacher; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28473/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the number of PE teachers employed in second level schools is not readily available within my Department. Teacher allocations for second level schools are approved by my Department on an annual basis in accordance with generally applied rules based on recognised pupil enrolments on the 30th of September of the preceding school year. Each school management authority is required to organise its curriculum, teaching time-table and subject options having regard to pupils' needs within the limits of its approved teacher allocation. The appointment of teachers to posts within the approved quota is a matter for the authorities of the schools concerned.

At primary level, Physical Education is one of the seven curriculum areas and is an intrinsic element of the Primary School Curriculum which was revised in 1999. A minimum of one hour of physical education per week is recommended all primary school pupils. All qualified Primary teachers are qualified to teach the full spectrum of the Primary Curriculum including Physical Education.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio.

79. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of primary schools which during each school year beginning September 2002 to date in 2007, have pupil teacher ratios of 35:1 or higher, 30:1 to 34:1, 25:1 to 29:1, 20:1 to 24:1 and less than 20:1; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28475/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): In determining the pupil teacher

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

ratio at primary level, all teachers in primary schools are counted, not only those employed as mainstream classroom teachers, but also those working in areas such as resource teaching and language support. In determining class size in primary schools, class teachers are counted. Pupil Teacher Ratio in respect of all primary schools is currently only available at national level and is not disaggregated by school or any other variable. The following is the Pupil Teacher Ratio nationally since September 2002:

2002/03, 18.0;
2003/04, 17.44;
2004/05, 17.1;
2005/06, 17;
2006/07, 16.4.

The Pupil Teacher Ratio for the 2007/08 school year is currently being compiled in my Department.

The tables attached indicate the number of pupils by class size by county for the years 2002/03 to 2006/07. Information in relation to class sizes is provided in the annual census of primary schools. The data relating to class size for the 2007/08 school year will not be available until this process has been completed later in the school year.

As the Deputy will be aware, major improvements have been made in staffing at primary level

in recent years. There are now 5,000 more primary teachers than there were in 2002. By the 2006/07 school year, we had reduced the average class size in our primary schools to 24, while the pupil teacher ratio was 16.4:1, including resource teachers etc. In that year, schools were staffed on the basis of a general rule of at least one classroom teacher for every 28 children. Given that the national average was 24, many schools benefited from much more favourable staffing ratios than this. Extra teachers were provided by the Government for the 2007/08 school year to improve primary school staffing so that schools would generally get at least one classroom teacher for every 27 children.

A further initiative in recent years that has been of direct benefit to primary schools has been the change in the criteria for developing schools. For the current school year the threshold for getting a developing school post was reduced specifically to help schools that are seeing large increases in enrolments each year. Over 330 such posts have been sanctioned in the 2007/08 school year compared to 280 in 2006/07. The improvements we have made in school staffing in recent years are absolutely unparalleled. The Government is committed to providing more teachers to our primary schools over the next five years in order to reduce class sizes. We will also continue our focus on measures to improve the quality of education in our primary schools to ensure that increased resources lead to better outcomes for our children.

Number of Pupils by Class Size Range by County (2006/2007)

	0-9	10-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 & Over	Totals
Carlow	8	352	1,552	2,373	1,403	148		5,836
Cavan	44	948	2,458	2,513	1,652	425		8,040
Clare	167	1,814	3,111	3,782	2,587	612	40	12,113
Cork City	25	3,191	3,166	4,736	2,467	70		13,655
Cork County	203	4,071	8,585	14,209	9,671	1,369		38,108
Donegal	199	2,845	4,292	6,596	3,575	177		17,684
Dublin City	149	8,543	10,913	13,256	7,742	288		40,891
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	8	1,505	2,604	6,672	4,854	35		15,678
Fingal		1,295	3,430	13,025	8,140	35		25,925
Galway City		1,269	1,324	1,932	1,456			5,981
Galway County	322	3,625	5,420	5,723	2,787	175		18,052
Kerry	75	2,351	3,849	5,699	2,522	253		14,749
Kildare	9	940	3,754	11,905	6,397	216		23,221
Kilkenny	16	989	2,207	3,688	2,354	322		9,576
Laois	31	806	1,981	2,505	2,184	70		7,577
Leitrim	22	755	787	1,129	378	76		3,147
Limerick City	18	1,483	1,275	2,193	1,325	35		6,329
Limerick County	80	1,615	3,112	5,139	3,497	211		13,654
Longford	46	843	1,113	1,375	408	74		3,859
Louth	13	1,500	2,844	5,373	3,778	358		13,866
Mayo	231	3,157	3,479	4,379	1,985	146		13,377

	0-9	10-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 & Over	Totals
Meath	18	1,274	4,160	8,394	5,434	427		19,707
Monaghan	73	885	1,729	2,426	1,073	179		6,365
Offaly	21	812	2,483	4,024	1,584	71		8,995
Roscommon	128	1,617	1,741	1,969	903	70		6,428
Sligo	63	1,098	2,234	2,178	781	218		6,572
South Dublin		3,436	6,757	10,888	6,042	140		27,263
Tipperary N.R.	20	1,233	2,343	2,705	1,160	105		7,566
Tipperary S.R.	62	1,209	2,957	3,268	1,690	249		9,435
Waterford City		446	1,348	2,387	1,389	36		5,606
Waterford County		623	2,025	2,835	1,181	182	40	6,886
Westmeath	59	985	2,717	3,717	1,932	143		9,553
Wexford	9	1,540	3,830	6,468	3,302	428	41	15,618
Wicklow	41	1,329	3,530	4,964	3,951	287	41	
Total	2,160	60,84	109,110	174,425	101,584	7,630	162	455,455

Number of Pupils by Class Size Range by County (2005/2006)

	0-9	10-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 & Over	Totals
Carlow	8	462	1,353	2,270	1,304	142		5,539
Cavan	32	1,282	2,199	2,334	1,552	285		7,684
Clare	150	1,740	3,242	3,504	2,476	640	41	11,793
Cork City	60	2,930	3,324	4,193	2,754	286		13,547
Cork County	192	3,769	8,166	13,401	9,592	1,792	44	36,956
Donegal	154	2,789	4,904	5,914	3,300	185		17,246
Dublin Belgard		3,501	5,796	10,541	6,495	245		26,578
Dublin City	56	8,811	10,000	13,346	8,133	360		40,706
Dublin Fingal		1,251	3,122	10,775	9,021	322		24,491
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	16	1,413	2,567	6,379	4,989	248	0	15,612
Galway City	9	1,094	1,165	2,066	1,366	35		5,735
Galway County	292	3,979	4,987	5,073	2,830	214	40	17,415
Kerry	105	2,252	4,161	4,969	2,898	70		14,455
Kildare		990	3,761	10,437	6,351	531		22,070
Kilkenny	9	1,248	2,126	3,332	2,383	176		9,274
Laois	26	816	1,641	3,169	1,466	72		7,190
Leitrim	32	819	861	953	160	146		2,971
Limerick City	27	1,249	1,491	1,973	1,392	106		6,238
Limerick County	104	1,719	3,371	5,184	2,758	212		13,348
Longford	80	699	997	1,292	471	71		3,610
Louth		1,097	2,967	5,260	3,731	282		13,337
Mayo	228	3,264	3,654	4,204	1,654	186		13,190
Meath	24	1,201	3,586	7,827	5,220	757		18,615
Monaghan	52	926	1,785	2,126	1,139	214		6,242
Offaly	25	1,000	2,413	3,516	1,684			8,638
Roscommon	138	1,622	1,867	1,685	721	148	40	6,221
Sligo	49	1,226	2,133	1,911	975	143		6,437
Tipperary N.R.	21	1,131	2,612	2,515	913	106	41	7,339
Tipperary S.R.	30	1,397	3,273	2,882	1,358	284		9,224
Waterford City		342	1,272	2,668	1,021	72		5,375

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

	0-9	10-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 & Over	Totals
Waterford County	9	863	1,723	2,771	1,109	248		6,723
Westmeath	40	1,004	2,416	3,352	2,282	144		9,238
Wexford	27	1,449	3,797	5,922	3,503	497		15,195
Wicklow	25	1,336	3,065	4,621	4,222	4,65		13,734
Totals	2,020	60,671	105,797	162,365	101,223	9,684	206	441,966

Number of Pupils by Class Size Range by County (2004/2005)

	0-9	10-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 & Over	Totals
Carlow	16	474	1,297	2,034	1,491	105		5,417
Cavan	61	1,488	1,810	2,625	1,370	35		7,389
Clare	109	2,083	3,326	2,974	2,792	357		11,641
Cork City	32	3,013	3,320	4,129	2,945	214		13,653
Cork County	138	4,267	7,916	13,239	9,041	1,369	41	36,011
Donegal	139	2,962	4,649	5,572	3,625	179		17,126
Dublin Belgard	9	3,672	5,478	9,705	6,951	393		26,208
Dublin City	130	8,667	9,801	13,295	8,010	570	41	40,514
Dublin Fingal		995	3,493	10,142	8,409	212		23,251
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown		1,473	2,358	6,378	5,130	274		15,613
Galway City	26	1,089	1,283	1,868	1,217	140		5,623
Galway County	266	4,346	4,433	5,176	2,501	362		17,084
Kerry	87	2,113	3,918	5,258	2,779	185		14,340
Kildare	9	811	3,862	9,378	6,560	670		21,290
Kilkenny	8	1,072	2,728	2,665	2,290	430		9,193
Laois	7	1,050	1,756	2,801	1,181	142		6,937
Leitrim	38	680	958	950	285	71		2,982
Limerick City	40	1,433	1,248	2,205	1,278	35		6,239
Limerick County	77	1,898	3,657	4,416	2,949	249		13,246
Longford	121	632	824	1,432	500	35		3,544
Louth	9	1,306	2,938	4,568	3,398	356		12,575
Mayo	297	3,162	4,022	4,111	1,528	106		13,226
Meath	16	1,171	3,692	7,194	5,118	461	40	17,692
Monaghan	15	1,031	1,850	1,980	1,076	213		6,165
Offaly	34	990	2,202	3,684	1,300	180		8,390
Roscommon	168	1,533	1,800	1,753	773	36		6,063
Sligo	86	1,401	1,863	1,654	1,373			6,377
Tipperary N.R.	30	1,422	2,259	2,375	936	105		7,127
Tipperary S.R.	46	1,428	2,887	3,231	1,452	217		9,261
Waterford City		645	1,287	2,144	1,092			5,168
Waterford County		997	1,850	2,229	1,190	284		6,550
Westmeath	46	1,091	2,404	3,522	1,827	144		9,034
Wexford	18	1,451	3,876	5,812	3,389	285	40	14,871
Wicklow	17	1,628	3,055	4,951	3,547	322		13,520
Total	2,095	63,474	104,100	155,450	99,303	8,736	162	433,320

Number Of Pupils By Class Size Range By County (2003/2004)

	0-9	10-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 & Over	Totals
Carlow	25	631	1,363	2,201	970	105		5,295
Cavan	35	1,389	2,170	2,501	1,043	35		7,173
Clare	137	2,240	2,502	3,498	2,426	644		11,447
Cork City	40	3,187	3,552	3,789	2,868	392		13,828
Cork County	148	4,000	8,666	13,608	8,063	1,004	40	35,529
Donegal	178	2,954	4,704	5,433	3,546	145		16,960
Dublin Belgard	9	3,196	6,078	9,000	7,118	462	46	25,909
Dublin City	136	8,642	10,227	13,201	8,261	571		41,038
Dublin Fingal	9	992	3,591	9,847	7,877	425		22,741
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown		1,374	2,837	6,167	5,311	140	0	15,829
Galway City	42	1,060	1,179	2,004	1,211	70		5,566
Galway County	259	4,100	4,628	4,460	3,038	470		16,955
Kerry	52	2,305	3,821	5,242	2,609	180		14,209
Kildare	9	895	3,396	8,727	7,037	707		20,771
Kilkenny	8	1,158	2,473	3,079	2,131	284		9,133
Laois	36	920	1,529	2,799	1,368	182		6,834
Leitrim	53	616	855	870	543	36		2,973
Limerick City	27	1,275	1,227	2,606	1,235	71		6,441
Limerick County	105	2,094	3,525	4,353	2,717	397		13,191
Longford	99	740	1,028	1,241	376			3,484
Louth	1	1,616	2,589	4,438	3,221	425		12,290
Mayo	224	3,950	3,765	3,661	1,365	251		13,216
Meath	38	1,664	3,243	6,310	5,291	424	44	17,014
Monaghan	48	1,000	1,731	2,199	994	220		6,192
Offaly	19	1,218	2,259	3,566	1,051	105		8,218
Roscommon	166	1,635	1,931	1,510	758	35		6,035
Sligo	87	1,208	1,983	2,076	1,102			6,456
Tipperary N.R.	22	1,261	2,418	2,434	754	144		7,033
Tipperary S.R.	33	1,663	2,532	3,683	1,287	35		9,233
Waterford City		548	1,640	1,797	1,156	70		5,211
Waterford County	17	1,038	1,679	2,239	1,276	176		6,425
Westmeath	55	1,102	2,249	3,568	1,844	105		8,923
Wexford		1,394	3,775	5,997	3,050	464	42	14,722
Wicklow	37	1,216	3,124	5,306	3,328	426		13,437
Totals	2,154	64,281	104,269	153,410	96,225	9,200	172	429,711

Number Of Pupils By Class Size Range By County (2002/2003)

	0-9	10-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 & Over	Totals
Carlow		541	1,456	2,051	1,199	71		5,318
Cavan	14	1,326	2,021	2,361	1,230	176		7,128
Clare	100	2,154	3,063	3,003	2,374	640	42	11,376
Cork City	26	2,776	3,518	3,973	3,448	423		14,164
Cork County	206	4,654	8,200	12,503	8,132	1,366	44	35,105
Donegal	172	3,226	4,599	5,202	3,386	245		16,830
Dublin Belgard	8	3,518	5,234	8,882	7,706	429	40	25,817
Dublin City	48	8,785	10,987	12,130	8,824	533		41,307
Dublin Fingal	7	1,235	3,471	9,007	7,467	892	82	22,161

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

	0-9	10-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 & Over	Totals
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	26	1,418	2,698	5,646	5,759	492	0	16,039
Galway City	9	911	1,140	1,775	1,436	391		5,662
Galway County	206	3,879	4,610	5,322	2,599	252		16,868
Kerry	73	2,351	3,425	5,422	2,608	290		14,169
Kildare	9	669	3,036	8,778	6,917	854		20,263
Kilkenny	9	1,134	2,554	2,901	2,246	212	83	9,139
Laois	18	920	1,669	2,545	1,312	179		6,643
Leitrim	29	708	822	968	345	37		2,909
Limerick City	8	1,378	1,530	2,250	1,270	35		6,471
Limerick County	106	1,845	3,411	4,668	2,792	396		13,218
Longford	132	819	840	1,084	567			3,442
Louth	7	1,291	2,592	4,459	3,536	251		12,136
Mayo	158	3,563	4,030	3,922	1,748	107		13,528
Meath	16	1,048	3,283	6,661	4,426	877	83	16,394
Monaghan	49	1,054	1,728	2,020	1,292	38	40	6,221
Offaly	20	1,369	2,237	3,097	1,284	149	41	8,197
Roscommon	149	1,773	1,838	1,430	659	74		5,923
Sligo	68	1,033	1,912	2,344	935	181		6,473
Tipperary N.R.	27	1,319	2,221	2,480	788	178		7,013
Tipperary S.R.	33	1,601	2,390	3,641	1,449	146		9,260
Waterford City	9	521	1,293	2,076	1,160	178		5,237
Waterford County		876	1,834	2,287	1,246	142		6,385
Westmeath	31	1,190	2,281	3,234	1,999			8,735
Wexford	10	1,265	3,994	5,950	2,815	397		14,431
Wicklow	30	1,438	2,883	4,820	3,728	389		13,288
Totals	1,813	63,588	102,800	148,892	98,682	11,020	455	427,250

National Monitoring Programme.

80. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to her reply to Parliamentary Question No. 157 of 16 November 2006, when she will introduce a separate programme of national monitoring which will enable trend data on pupil achievement in different categories of school to be compiled; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28468/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): It is envisaged that the monitoring will be carried out by the ERC based on the model currently used to conduct national surveys of reading and mathematics in primary schools. The assessments will be targeted at

- A nationally representative sample of schools
- A representative sample of schools in the School Support Programme of DEIS
- A representative sample of Irish medium schools. It is planned that the national monitoring will be repeated on a cyclical basis, with the DEIS sample being undertaken more frequently. The purpose will be to identify changes in national trends over

time for particular categories of school and to inform ongoing policy development. No individual school results will be identifiable in this process. My Department has not finalised all the details yet regarding the overall programme for national monitoring.

However, a separate evaluation of DEIS, the Action Plan on Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, is under way, focused on schools in the School Support Programme of DEIS. This is being prioritised to ensure base line data which will enable the impact of the DEIS programme to be assessed over the period to 2009/10. In spring 2007, baseline achievement data, based on tests in English and Mathematics, has been gathered by the Educational Research Centre from about 17,000 pupils in a sample of almost 500 participating schools. Pupils took tests in English and mathematics in second, third, and sixth class in the urban strand of SSP, and in third and sixth class in the rural strand of the programme. Testing will be repeated in the same schools and with many of the same pupils in the spring of 2010. The data gathered from the DEIS evaluation will provide important information for

the DEIS strand of the national monitoring programme.

Higher Education Grants.

81. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to Parliamentary Question No. 116 of 2 October 2007, if the student maintenance grant has increased in line with the increases in the student charge levied by the third level institutes, which now stands at €825; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28457/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I wish to advise the Deputy that I announced a 10% increase in the standard rate of student grant with effect from the 2007/08 academic year. This means an increase in the maximum rate of ordinary grant to €3,420 for 2007/08. Students who qualify for a maintenance grant will also have the student service charge paid on their behalf. In addition, over 12,500 students in receipt of the “Special Rate” of maintenance grant will benefit from an even more substantial increase of over 14%, with the maximum rate for 2007/08 increasing to €6,690.

School Accommodation.

82. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Minister for Education and Science the reasons for the delay in finalising a site for a new and permanent school building for a school (details supplied) in Dublin 7. [26894/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Department acknowledges the need for a solution to the accommodation difficulties at the school to which the Deputy refers and is committed to working to achieve a satisfactory solution as soon as possible. In this regard, the Department is actively pursuing a number of options. One of these options is the building of a permanent structure on the school's current site. A number of issues have arisen in relation to this proposal, with regard to which clarification is being sought. When progress has been made in this regard, the school authorities will be notified immediately.

Language Support Services.

83. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Science if her Department has plans to assist the one fifth of children in primary schools in the Dublin 15 area who require English language support; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28482/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): In order to meet the language needs of students in our schools whose first language is not English or Irish, additional support is given to their schools which can take the form of

financial assistance, additional teaching posts or portions of posts.

The level of extra financial or teaching support provided to any school is determined by the numbers of eligible non-English speaking students enrolled. I indicated in January last that the limit of two teachers per school and the limit of two years' support to an individual pupil which had applied up to then, will no longer apply. As a result, an individual school may be allocated up to six language support posts under the arrangements now in place.

Schools with between 3 and 13 eligible pupils receive grant assistance towards the cost of employing part-time teachers. Schools with 3 to 8 such pupils receive a grant of over €6,300, while schools with between 9 and 13 such pupils receive over €9,500. Schools with 14 or more such pupils are entitled to one or more language support teachers, the number of which has increased dramatically in recent years. There are now over 1,400 language support teachers in our primary schools.

In order to ensure that schools can accurately and objectively assess the language requirement of children, my Department will be sending to schools assessment materials which have been developed by Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT). The assessment materials will enable schools to ensure that the specific language requirements of children needing support are met in a targeted way. The IILT materials will also enable accurate initial and on-going assessment of the language proficiency of the child and his or her need for continued language support.

School Accommodation.

84. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Science the steps she has taken to connect her Department's planning and building unit to the Central Statistics Office in order that the unit can have population forecasts, locally and nationally, which would indicate the scale and possible increase in the demand for primary and secondary school places arising from the existing or increased population; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28485/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The process of assessing the need for new or additional educational facilities at primary or post-primary level in any given area entails consideration of all relevant factors, including enrolment and demographic trends, housing developments and the capacity of existing schools to meet the demand for places. Liaison with existing schools is also an important part of the process, as the school authorities would usually alert the Department where, in their view, the need for additional accommodation is anticipated. In this way, every effort is made to ensure that there is adequate existing provision, or that

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

timely arrangements are made to extend capacity or provide new infrastructure where necessary.

In addition, Local Authorities are obliged by statute to refer draft local area development plans to the Department for observation and comment so that lands can be zoned for future education use. There are numerous sites reserved for education purposes particularly in the rapidly developing areas so as to ensure that there will be sufficient land set aside and available for the future development of education infrastructure. Over and above the statutory consultation provisions in relation to local authority draft area development plans, the Department has in recent years worked to strengthen contacts with local authorities to enable informed decisions to be made in planning future educational provision.

My Department makes extensive use of data from the Census of Population for a variety of purposes including long-term projections of enrolment at national and local level. The census results for 2006 are of use in identifying broad trends in total population by county and local area. School Planning Section use census data when drafting area development plans and planning school provision for likely enrolment at local area level. It should be borne in mind that Census data do not provide a completely precise guide to future enrolment patterns in any particular locality. Given the time lag involved from Census date to publication of detailed results by area and age as well as uncertainties about trends in enrolment across area boundaries, care is needed in making detailed projections into the future for any specific locality.

The Deputy may be aware that the Programme for Government includes a commitment to establish a Developing Areas Unit in my Department. The unit will be solely dedicated to progressing school planning in rapidly developing areas, building on improvements that have already been made in school planning, in recent years. Staff in the unit will liaise with local authorities, identify where new schools are needed and ensure that they are delivered in the fastest possible timeframe.

Second Level Education.

85. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Minister for Education and Science if her attention has been drawn to the recent study undertaken by the ESRI on behalf of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment which states that 25% of third year secondary students take up grinds; if her attention has further been drawn to the fact that students derive no advantage from such systems; her views on whether they undermine the teaching standards in secondary schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28467/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I am aware of the study to which the Deputy refers. While I respect the right of parents to make choices for their children's education, I do not believe that it should be necessary to pay for grinds. My focus is on supporting schools to provide a high quality of education that enables students to reach their full potential.

Third Level Fees.

86. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to Parliamentary Question No. 496 on 23 October 2007, if she envisages a closer working relationship between the British and Irish Departments of education, to allow students living in the north west to access universities in Northern Ireland, which are literally ten miles from their homes, without the unaffordable level of fees currently in place; if, in view of the speed the peace process is moving at, this will happen sooner rather than later; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28394/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I presume that the Deputy is referring to the issue of tuition fees for students studying in Northern Ireland. Under my Department's Free Fees Initiative the Exchequer meets the tuition fees of eligible students who are attending approved undergraduate third-level courses in the State. There are no plans to extend this initiative to cover third level institutions in Northern Ireland.

Under my Department's Higher Education Grant Schemes, maintenance grants are available to eligible students pursuing approved undergraduate courses in other EU Member States, including Northern Ireland. In general, approved courses are those pursued in a third level institution, which is maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from public funds. However the payment of undergraduate tuition fees under these schemes does not extend to approved courses outside the State and there are no plans to change this position at present.

It is understood however that students attending Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ireland and who are ordinarily resident in a Member State of the European Union will be eligible for a fee loan from the Northern Ireland Authorities up to the amount charged by the Higher Education Institution. Further clarification can be sought by the individual from Department of Employment and Learning in the Northern Ireland. Their e-mail address is student-finance@delni.gov.uk.

Section 473A Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997 also provides for tax relief on tuition fees, at the standard rate of tax in respect of approved courses at approved colleges of higher education including certain approved undergraduate and postgraduate courses in EU and non-EU member states.

Privately-Owned Schools.

87. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to her reply to Parliamentary Question No. 119 of 2 October 2007, the comprehensive details of the long term lease agreements referred to in the second line of the last paragraph of her reply; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28456/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The type of Lease involved, in the case of State investment in privately-owned schools, is not a demise of property but rather it puts a charge on the property. This charge, on the Department's behalf, is registered as a burden on the relevant folio and requires to be legally surrendered by the Department should the owner of the property wish to sell. This charge does not permit the Department to prevent the property owner from selling. However, the Department may seek a full or partial refund of the capital investment, which is the subject of the Lease, in accordance with the terms of the individual Lease.

As part of our ongoing modernisation of administrative systems and delivery methods, School Building Section is in the process of finalising a generic Deed of Covenant and Charge to protect State investment in privately-owned schools. This will be more flexible and less onerous to put in place than the old-style Lease. However, as with the old-style Lease, the Deed will empower the Department only to re-coup its investment should the owner decide to sell or otherwise to cease operation as an educational facility. It does not confer the power to prevent a sale in such circumstances, as long as appropriate recoupment is made by the property owner.

The draft Deed of Covenant and Charge is currently being examined in my Department in consultation with the Chief State Solicitor's Office. Upon finalisation, it is intended to put the new Deed of Covenant and Charge in place for each privately-owned school where investment of State capital funding has been made.

Third Level Courses.

88. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Science, in view of recent reports (details supplied) about the high failure rate among third level students studying science courses, her Department's plans to dumb down the various third level science courses in order to avoid the high drop-out rate; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28483/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Quality assurance in higher education is governed by statutory provision and is based upon expert peer review, of both Irish and international experts, which must include representation from students, business and other stakeholders. The Irish system of higher edu-

cation quality assurance system itself has been reviewed and I would refer the Deputy to the independent report of the European Universities Association on the university quality assurance system, published in 2005. That review found that the Irish system, with its emphasis not only on quality assurance, but also quality improvement, could act as a model internationally. The review also noted that the system was relatively new and made recommendations for further improvement, which are being undertaken by the institutions, with appropriate oversight from the HEA.

I am also committed to ensure that second level students continue to see science at third level as an positive option, both in terms of their interest in the areas, and their future employment prospects. The Government is supporting Discover Science and Engineering to work with schools to promote student interest in science, while my Department is continuing to invest heavily in research and development. That investment, which is essential to secure Ireland's continued economic and social development, also provides exciting opportunities for research careers for those entering science courses.

Early School Leavers.

89. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of pupils who left school before sitting their junior certificate examinations still participating in education and other forms of training; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28474/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The specific data requested by the Deputy is not available to my Department. The emphasis placed by this Government on tackling educational disadvantage in recent years is absolutely unprecedented. Since 2003, we have increased investment in educational inclusion measures at all levels by no less than 60%, to €730 million in 2007. We are determined to ensure that young people from disadvantaged areas get the support they need to encourage them to finish school. To this end, we have provided additional investment in a wide range of areas, including extra teachers, grants for books, homework clubs, school meals and summer camps. We have also expanded access to important services such as the Home School Community Liaison scheme and the School Completion Programme which work with students at risk of early school leaving and their families.

Indeed, there are now approximately 620 staff working in services such as these, including over 130 extra posts allocated under the DEIS Action Plan over the past two years. In addition, the National Educational Welfare Board now has over 100 staff, and is specifically tasked with tackling attendance problems that if left unchecked can culminate in young people dropping out of school. There is an emphasis under DEIS on

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

helping children to make a smooth transition to second level. Initiatives such as familiarisation days and week-long transfer programmes have been shown to have been very successful in that regard. Schools participating in the School Support Programme under DEIS are being encouraged to prioritise the development of effective transfer programmes for pupils making the transition to post-primary education.

In terms of achievement at post-primary level, it is important to look at the issue in terms of attainment of second level education or equivalent rather than just school completion. Focusing just on school devalues the hard work of students who continued their education in Youthreach centres, went on to train for apprenticeships through FÁS, or acquired qualifications through other equally valuable routes. The Government is encouraged by data that shows that the attainment levels of our young people have improved significantly in recent years. By 2006, 85.4% of Irish 20 to 24 year olds had obtained upper second level education or equivalent -up from 82.6% in 2000 and significantly ahead of the EU average of 77.8%.

The improvement in the proportion of 20-24 year olds with at least second level education or equivalent in recent years is testament to the success of the Government's dual strategy of both improving school completion levels and increasing access to second chance and further education. Further improvements in the availability of second chance education are a priority for us. As the Deputy may be aware, funding has been provided for 400 extra Youthreach places this year. 600 more places are due to be provided by 2009 under the Towards 2016 social partnership agreement. We are also conscious that the content and perceived relevance of the school curricula have an important effect on students' motivation and desire to finish school. Under the DEIS plan, more students in disadvantaged areas will have access to the Junior Certificate Schools Programme and the Leaving Cert Applied programme.

To conclude, there is evidence that the Government's focus on improving school completion rates and attainment levels in recent years

is making a difference. I assure the Deputy that further improvements in this area will continue to be a priority for us in the years ahead. Social inclusion measures across other Government departments have also been prioritised under the Towards 2016 agreement, the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion and the National Development Plan.

Educational Disadvantage.

90. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to her reply to Parliamentary Question No. 103 of 24 October 2006, if she will provide a list of the 670 primary schools and 203 second level schools that have been invited to participate in the new school support programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28469/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan for educational inclusion, provides for a standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage and a new integrated School Support Programme (SSP). DEIS will bring together and build upon a number of existing interventions in schools with a concentrated level of disadvantage.

The process of identifying schools for participation in DEIS was managed by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) on behalf of my Department and supported by quality assurance work co-ordinated through the Department's regional offices and the Inspectorate. The identification process involved a survey of primary schools conducted by the Educational Research Centre in May, 2005 and the updating by them of existing data sources on levels of disadvantage in second-level schools. Details of the schools included in the School Support Programme under DEIS are in the tables. They are also available on my Department's website.

The Department has put in place separate arrangements for new and newly amalgamated primary schools established since 2005. The website list of schools in the SSP will be revised shortly to include new and newly amalgamated schools that are identified for inclusion in the programme.

Roll No.	Urban	School Name	Address	County
08490N	Urban	St Clares Primary School	Cavan, Co Cavan	Cavan
17326B	Urban	S N Naomh Feidhlim	Cavan, Co Cavan	Cavan
19559L	Urban	Chriost Ri	Cloughleigh, Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
05940D	Urban	Scoil Ursula	Blackrock, Co Cork	Cork
14198D	Urban	Naomh Eoin Easpal	Mayfield, Co Cork	Cork
16680O	Urban	Scoil Colmcille	Blarney St, Cork	Cork
17024I	Urban	Scoil Na Croise Naofa	Mahon, Cork	Cork
17045Q	Urban	St Patricks B N S	Ballyhooley Road, Cork	Cork
18153B	Urban	S N Padraig Naofa C	Dillons Cross, Cork	Cork
18154D	Urban	S N Padraig Naofa	Dillons Cross, Cork	Cork

Roll No.	Urban	School Name	Address	County
18217B	Urban	Scoil Padre Pio N S	Churchfield, Cork City	Cork
18587L	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Banrion	Mayfield, Cork	Cork
18786R	Urban	Scoil Iosagain	Farranree, Cork	Cork
19426P	Urban	S N Mharcuis B	An Gleann, Corcaigh	Cork
19427R	Urban	S N Bhreanndain C	An Ghleann, Corcaigh	Cork
19714U	Urban	Mhuire Ar Chnoc Haoine	Knocknaheeny, Cork	Cork
19908K	Urban	Gaelscoil Mhachan	Carraig Dubh, Corcaigh	Cork
19909M	Urban	Gaelscoil Peig Sayers	C/O Na Piarasaigh C.L.G., Parklands, Corcaigh	Cork
20036J	Urban	North Presentation Primary School	Gerald Griffin Street, Cork City	Cork
20038N	Urban	Scoil Aiseiri Christ	Farranree, Cork	Cork
20140E	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Fatima	North Monastery, Cork	Cork
19438W	Urban	Scoil Colmcille Senior	Wyattville, Ballybrack, Co Dublin	Dublin
19641T	Urban	St Colmcille Jun NS	Wyattville, Ballybrack, Co Dublin	Dublin
19840C	Urban	Holy Family School	Dunedin Park, Monkstown, Co Dublin	Dublin
19979K	Urban	St Kevins N S	Sallynoggin, Co Dublin	Dublin
20218P	Urban	Archbishop Mc Quaid NS	Loughlinstown, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin	Dublin
00752A	Urban	Central Senior Mxd N S	Marlboro St, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
01795A	Urban	Central Infs School	Marlboro St, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
11776C	Urban	St Laurence O'Toole Junior Boys	Seville Place, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
12448N	Urban	Gardiner Street Convent	Gardiner Street, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
15056L	Urban	S N San Vinseann Cailin	North William St, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
15816I	Urban	St Vincents Inf Boys	North William Street, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
17110B	Urban	Naomh Lorcan O Tuathail	Plas Seibhil, Baile Atha Cliath 1	Dublin 01
17881G	Urban	Scoil Ui Chonaill	Nth Richmond Street, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
19831B	Urban	Scoil Chaoimhin	Sraid Mhaoilbhríde, Baile Atha Cliath 1	Dublin 01
19895E	Urban	Scoil Mhuir S Iosaf	St Marys Place, Plas Mhuire, Off Dorset Street, Dublin 7	Dublin 01
19946S	Urban	Rutland Street N S	Lower Rutland Street, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
20228S	Urban	St Laurence O Toole Girls School	49 Seville Place, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
11578V	Urban	City Quay Boys N S	City Quay, Dublin 2	Dublin 02
19896G	Urban	Scoil Caitriona Na Mbraithre	Baggot St, Dublin 2	Dublin 02
19981U	Urban	St Marys N S	Windsor Ave, Fairview, Dublin 3	Dublin 03
03917V	Urban	Naomh Padraig Boys	Cambridge Road, Ringsend, Dublin 4	Dublin 04
15253N	Urban	St Patricks Girls NS	Cambridge Road, Dublin 4	Dublin 04
17732M	Urban	Scoil Chiarain	Ascal Ui Choileain, Domhnach Cairne, Baile Atha Cliath 5	Dublin 05
18968A	Urban	St Malachys B N S	Edenmore, Raheny, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
18969C	Urban	St Eithnes Senior G N S	Edenmore, Raheny, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19037E	Urban	St Monicas N S	Edenmore, Raheny, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19262L	Urban	St Benedicts N S	Grange Park, Raheny, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19297H	Urban	Cromcastle Green B N S	Kilmore Rd West, Artane, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19298J	Urban	Scoil Nais Ide Cailini	Kilmore Road West, Artane, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19440J	Urban	St Marys NS	Grange Pk View, Raheny, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19935N	Urban	Scoil Eoin	Greendale Road, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
20064O	Urban	Our Lady Of Consolation NS	Collins Ave East, Donnycarney, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
05933G	Urban	Georges Hill Convent	Georges Hill, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
09932B	Urban	Stanhope St Convent	Stanhope Street, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
16695E	Urban	Scoil Na Mbrathar	North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
16988T	Urban	Christ The King B N S	Cabra, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
17464N	Urban	Fionnbarra Naofa	Cabra West, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
17465P	Urban	Dominican Convent Girls	Cabra, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
17466R	Urban	St Catherines Infant School	Cabra, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
20005V	Urban	Scoil Plas Mhuire	St Marys Place, Dorset Street, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
20035H	Urban	St Gabriels N S	Cowper Street, Dublin 7	Dublin 07

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Roll No.	Urban	School Name	Address	County
00743W	Urban	Mater Dei Primary School	Basin Lane, James Street, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
07546J	Urban	Goldenbridge Convent	Goldenbridge, Inchicore, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
13611D	Urban	Presentation Convent NS	Warrenmount, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
14556D	Urban	St Endas Primary School	St Endas Primary School, Whitefriar St, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
16786H	Urban	St Brigids Convent N S	The Coombe, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
16799Q	Urban	St Michaels C B S	Inchicore, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
18477E	Urban	Scoil Na Mbrathar	Francis Street, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
18519R	Urban	Scoil Seamus C B S	James Street, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
19933J	Urban	Scoil Treasa Naofa	Petrie Road, Donore Avenue, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
20104A	Urban	St Audoens NS	Cook Street, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
18910P	Urban	Bantiarna Na Mbuanna B	Baile Munna, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
18911R	Urban	Bantiarna Na Mbuanna G	Baile Munna, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
19242F	Urban	Our Lady Of Victories Infant N S	Ballymun Road, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
19302U	Urban	SN Na Maighdine Muire B	Ballymun, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
19303W	Urban	Na Maighdine Mhuire	Virgin Mary, Girls National School, Ballymun, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
18341C	Urban	SN Louise De Marillac C	Drumfin Rd, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
18342E	Urban	SN Louise De Marillac	Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
18585H	Urban	SN Banrion Na Naingéal	Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
18843D	Urban	Bainrion Na N-Aingal 2	Ballyfermot Upper, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
19661C	Urban	St Gabriels NS	Dominican Campus, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
19662E	Urban	St Michaels NS	Dominican Convent, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
19663G	Urban	St Raphaels NS	Dominican Convent, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
19766Q	Urban	Scoil Iosagain/Mhuire	Mount La Salle, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
19767S	Urban	Scoil Mhuire/Seosamh	Mount La Salle, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
20139T	Urban	Inchicore NS	Sarsfield Road, Inchicore, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
18137D	Urban	S N Naomh Feargal	Finglas West, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19015R	Urban	St Josephs G N S	Barry Avenue, Finglas West, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19197D	Urban	St Kevins B N S	Barry Avenue, Finglas North-West, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19208F	Urban	Holy Spirit B N S	Silloge Rd, Baile Munna, Atha Cliath 11	Dublin 11
19209H	Urban	SN An Spioraid Naiomh C	Sillogue Rd, Ballymun, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19431I	Urban	St Josephs Jnr	Balcurris, Ballymun, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19489Q	Urban	SN Naomh Fínnín	Glenties Park, Rivermount, Finglas South, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19546C	Urban	St Oliver Plunkett N S	St Oliver Plunkett NS, St Helenas Drive, Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19583I	Urban	St Josephs Senior N S	St Josephs Senior NS, Balcurris, Ballymun, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19619D	Urban	St Malachys NS	Rivermount, Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19929S	Urban	St Brigids Senior Girls	Finglas Wes, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
20029M	Urban	St Brigids Infant N S	Wellmount Avenue, Finglas West, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
16964F	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Ogh 1	Loreto College, Crumlin Rd, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
17603B	Urban	Scoil Iosagain	Aughavannagh Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
17683C	Urban	Muire Og 2 Loreto Con	Crumlin Road, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
18386B	Urban	Marist National School	Clogher Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
19764M	Urban	Our Lady Of Wayside N S	Bluebell, Inchicore, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
19889J	Urban	Scoil Colm	Armagh Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
20014W	Urban	St Agnes N S	Armagh Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
19545A	Urban	Corduff N S	Corduff, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19601H	Urban	St Philip The Apostle Junior N S	Mountview, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19605P	Urban	Scoil Nais Mhuire Sois	Blakestown, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19636D	Urban	St Patricks Senior School	Corduff, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19643A	Urban	St Philips Senior N S	Mountview, Clonsilla, Dublin 15	Dublin 15

Roll No.	Urban	School Name	Address	County
19694R	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Sin	Blakestown, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19850F	Urban	Ladyswell N S	Ladyswell, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19490B	Urban	Scoil Mhuire	Ballyboden, Dublin 16	Dublin 16
17104G	Urban	St Francis Junior National School	Priorswood, Dublin 17	Dublin 17
19454U	Urban	Darndale NS Junior	Our Lady Immac Jun NS, Darndale, Malahide Road, Dublin 17	Dublin 17
19524P	Urban	Our Lady Immac Sen N S	Our Lady Immac Sen NS, Darndale, Dublin 17	Dublin 17
19668Q	Urban	St Francis Senior N S	Priorswood, Dublin 17	Dublin 17
19913D	Urban	St Josephs NS	Macroom Road, Bonnybrook, Dublin 17	Dublin 17
19509T	Urban	Scoil Nano Nagle	Bawnoge, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19510E	Urban	Talbot Senior NS	Bawnoge, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19569O	Urban	Neillstown N S	St Peter Apostle NS, Neillstown, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19575J	Urban	St Marys Junior N S	Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19642V	Urban	St Peter Apostle Sen NS	Neillstown, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19647I	Urban	St Marys Sen N S	Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19707A	Urban	St Ronans N S	Deansrath, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19743E	Urban	St Bernadettes Junior N S	Quarryvale, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19785U	Urban	St Bernadettes Senior N S	Quarryvale, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19464A	Urban	SN Naomh Colmcille	Homelawns, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19543T	Urban	Scoil N An Croi Ro Naofa	Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19577N	Urban	Scoil Iosa	Scoil Nais Iosa, Tymon North, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19613O	Urban	Scoil Cnoc Mhuire Sin	Knockmore Ave, Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19652B	Urban	An Chroi Ro Naofa Sois	Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19702N	Urban	St Thomas Junior N S	Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19765O	Urban	St Thomas Senior N S	Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19775R	Urban	Scoil Cnoc Mhuire Junior	Knockmore Ave, Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19782O	Urban	St Brigids N S	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19834H	Urban	St Aidans NS	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19872P	Urban	Scoil Chaitlin Maude	Cnoc Mhuire, Tamhlacht, Baile Atha Cliath 24	Dublin 24
20173T	Urban	St Annes Primary School	Fettercairn, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
01013N	Urban	Scoil Croi Iosa	Presentation Road, Galway	Galway
04515G	Urban	Scoil An Linbh Iosa	St Francis St, Galway	Galway
12250P	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Primary Sch	Dublin Rd, Tuam, Co Galway	Galway
16943U	Urban	Niochlas N S	An Cladach, An Gaillimh	Galway
17782E	Urban	S N Bride Naofa	Sean Tallamh, Gaillimh	Galway
19225F	Urban	Scoil Michil Naofa	Baile Ban, Gaillimh	Galway
19226H	Urban	Scoil Na Trionoide Naofa	Muirbheach, Gaillimh	Galway
20042E	Urban	Scoil An Chroi Naofa	Ballinasloe, Co Galway	Galway
16635J	Urban	Curragh Camp B N S	Curragh Camp, Co Kildare	Kildare
16636L	Urban	Curragh Camp G N S	Curragh Camp, Co Kildare	Kildare
19747M	Urban	Scoil Bhríde NS	Portlaoise, Co Laois	Laois
00570R	Urban	Mhuire Naofa Cailini	Mhuire Naofa, Limerick	Limerick
06936R	Urban	St JohNS Convent	Cathedral Place, Limerick City	Limerick
15320C	Urban	St Michaels NS	Cbs Grounds, Sexton Street, Limerick	Limerick
16715H	Urban	St John The Baptist Boys N S	Downey Street, Pennywell, Limerick	Limerick
16910F	Urban	Scoil Iosagain	Sraid Seasain, Limerick	Limerick
17445J	Urban	Scoil Lile Naofa	Kileely, Limerick	Limerick
17737W	Urban	Our Lady Queen Of Peace School	Janesboro, Limerick	Limerick
17941V	Urban	St Munchins G N S	Ballynanty, Limerick	Limerick
17942A	Urban	Scoil Mhainchin Buach	Bothar Siolbroin, Limerick	Limerick
18177P	Urban	Scoil Aine Naofa	Rath Caola, Co Luimni	Limerick

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Roll No.	Urban	School Name	Address	County
18653V	Urban	Scoil Naomh Iosef	Rathkeale, Co Limerick	Limerick
19372S	Urban	South Hill N S	South Hill, Limerick	Limerick
19667O	Urban	Our Lady Of Lourdes N S	Rosbrien, Limerick	Limerick
19830W	Urban	Corpus Christi N S	Moyross, Limerick	Limerick
19931F	Urban	Gaelscoil Sheoirse	Clancy, An Cnoc Theas, Luimneach	Limerick
20018H	Urban	Maria King Presentation Primary	Sexton Street, Limerick	Limerick
20184B	Urban	Galvone NS	Kennedy Park, Limerick City	Limerick
20185D	Urban	St Marys Boys NS	Island Road, Limerick	Limerick
00856M	Urban	Scoil Naomh Micheal	Longford, Co Longford	Longford
18178R	Urban	St Josephs Convent	Longford, Co Longford	Longford
20101R	Urban	The Sacred Heart Primary N.S.	Granard, Co Longford	Longford
14651U	Urban	Castletown Rd Convent	Castletown Rd, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
16469S	Urban	St Nicholas Monastery NS	Philip Street, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
19215C	Urban	S N Ard Mhuire C	Ballsgrove, Drogheda, Co Louth	Louth
19246N	Urban	S N An Tslanaitheora B	Ard Easmuinn, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
19247P	Urban	S N An Tslanaitheora C	Ard Easmuinn, un Dealgan, Co Louth	Louth
19479N	Urban	Rathmullan N S	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Co Louth	Louth
19673J	Urban	St Josephs N S	Avenue Road, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
19678T	Urban	St Pauls Senior NS	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Co Louth	Louth
20163Q	Urban	S.N Eoin Baiste	Fatima, Castletown, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
05215W	Urban	S N Croi Iosa	Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
17201E	Urban	Iosagain Buachailli Nai	Clochar Na Trocaire, Beal An Atha, Co Mhuigheo	Mayo
18506I	Urban	S N Naomh Pdraig B	Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
19713S	Urban	Arden Boys NS	Arden View, Tullamore, Co Offaly	Offaly
19910U	Urban	Sligo Project School	Abbey Quarter, Sligo	Sligo
18345K	Urban	S N Iosef Naofa	Cor An Bhile, Roscrea, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
19645E	Urban	St Oliver Plunketts NS	Heywood Rd, Clonmel, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
19511G	Urban	St Saviours NS	Ballybeg, Waterford City	Waterford
07722D	Urban	St Peters N S Snr	Athlone, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
16639R	Urban	SN Deaghan O Ceallaigh	Athlone, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
18405C	Urban	S N Phoil Naofa	Athlone, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
08221J	Urban	St Senans National Sch	Templeshannon, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Wexford
19739N	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Coolcotts	Scoil Mhuire, Coolcotts, Co Wexford	Wexford
20003R	Urban	St Aidans Parish School	Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford	Wexford
07246U	Urban	Sisters Of Charity N S	Ravenswell, Bray, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
18464S	Urban	Naomh Peadar N S	Bray, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
19477J	Urban	Holy Family B N S	Askea, Carlow, Co Carlow	Carlow
19478L	Urban	Holy Family G N S	Askea, Carlow, Co Carlow	Carlow
19708C	Urban	St Michaels Junior	Cootehill, Co Cavan	Cavan
19709E	Urban	St Michaels Senior	Cootehill, Co Cavan	Cavan
07315N	Urban	Holy Family Snr	Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
17957N	Urban	Holy Family Jr School	Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
20041C	Urban	Convent Of Mercy National School	Kilrush, Co Clare	Clare
20086B	Urban	Ennis Educate Together NS	Gort Road, Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
01197D	Urban	Strawberry Hill B N S	Sundays Well, Cork	Cork
02707F	Urban	Sunday's Well GNS	Blarney Road, Cork City	Cork
12473M	Urban	Greenmount Monastery NS	Scoil Muire Na Ngras, Greenmount, Co Cork	Cork
13031I	Urban	St Josephs Convent N S	Rathluirc, Co Cork	Cork
13696O	Urban	St Vincents Convent N S	St Marys Road, Cork	Cork
14000C	Urban	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	N Mhuire An Oileain, Sharman Crawford St, Cork	Cork
17105I	Urban	Muire Gan Smal C	Glasheen, Cork	Cork

Roll No.	Urban	School Name	Address	County
17639W	Urban	Scoil Na Mbraithre	Mitchelstown, Co Cork	Cork
17993R	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal B	Glasheen, Cork	Cork
18237H	Urban	Maria Assumpta G N S	Ballyphehane, Cork	Cork
18238J	Urban	Maria Assumpta Jnr Inft	Ballyphehane, Cork	Cork
18292P	Urban	Gaelscoil An Teaghlaigh Naofa	Baile Feithean, Co Chorcai	Cork
18377A	Urban	Iosef Naofa	Fermoy, Co Cork	Cork
18734V	Urban	Realt Na Maidine	Ballyphehane, Cork	Cork
19588S	Urban	Scoil Naomh Therese	Bishopstown, Cork	Cork
19977G	Urban	Bandon Boys NS	Bandon, Co Cork	Cork
16054M	Urban	St Patricks N S	Murlog, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
16821G	Urban	Clochar Padraig Naofa	Carndonagh, Co Donegal	Donegal
17945G	Urban	Scoil Naomh Chaitriona	Ballyshannon, Co Donegal	Donegal
18076J	Urban	SN Muire Gan Smal	Leithbhearr, Co Dun Na Ngall	Donegal
18605K	Urban	Scoil Naomh Padraig Boys	Carndonagh, Co Donegal	Donegal
20054L	Urban	Scoil Eoghan	Moville, Co Donegal	Donegal
05600C	Urban	Clochar San Dominic	Dunlaoghaire, Co Dublin	Dublin
19497P	Urban	Scoil Mhuire	Shankill, Co Dublin	Dublin
19515O	Urban	SN Naomh Treasa	Baile Brigin, Co Ath Cliath	Dublin
19938T	Urban	St Josephs	Tivoli Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin	Dublin
19960M	Urban	St Johns N S	Ballybrack, Co Dublin	Dublin
20186F	Urban	Castaheany Educate Together NS	C/O Griffeen Valley Educate Tog NS, Griffeen Glen Boulevard, Lucan, Co Dublin	Dublin
18726W	Urban	S N Seosamh Na Mbrathar	Fairview, Dublin 3	Dublin 03
19774P	Urban	St Josephs Mxd N S	East Wall, Dublin 3	Dublin 03
16567S	Urban	St Brigids Convent N S	Haddington Road, Dublin 4	Dublin 04
17279S	Urban	Scoil Muire	Haddington Road, Dublin 4	Dublin 04
18360G	Urban	Scoil Bhreandain	Coolock, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
18361I	Urban	S N Caitriona C	Coolock, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
18362K	Urban	Scoil Chaitriona Nainain	Measc Ave, Coolock, Dublin 05	Dublin 05
19920A	Urban	St John Of God N S	Kilmore Road, Artane, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19924I	Urban	Harolds Cross N S	Harolds Cross, Dublin 6W	Dublin 06
16989V	Urban	Christ The King GNS	Annaly Rd, Cabra, Dublin 07	Dublin 07
17459U	Urban	Christ The King I G	Cabra, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
20091R	Urban	St Peters NS	Phibsboro, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
17083B	Urban	S N Muire Gan Smal B	Inchicore, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
17893N	Urban	Sancta Maria C B S	Synge St, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
19430G	Urban	Scoil An Tseachtar Laoch	Bothar Bhaile Munna, Baile Munna, Baile Atha Cliath 9	Dublin 09
20015B	Urban	Gaelscoil Bhaile Munna	187 Bothar Choultraí, Baile Munna, Baile Atha Cliath 9	Dublin 09
18682F	Urban	St Canices B N S	Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
18683H	Urban	St Conices GNS	Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
20059V	Urban	Mother Of Divine Grace	Holy Faith NS, Ferndale Ave, Ballygall, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
16983J	Urban	S N Naomh Cillin	Bluebell, Inchicore, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
17355I	Urban	Our Lady of Good Council GNS	Mourne Road, Drimnagh, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
17356K	Urban	Muire Na Dea Coirle Inf	Mourne Road, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
19669S	Urban	Lady Of Good Counsel NS	Mourne Rd, Drimnagh, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
19922E	Urban	Our Ladys N S	St Columbanus Road, Milltown, Dublin 14	Dublin 14
19939V	Urban	Scoil Naisiunta An Dea Aoire	Whitehall Road, Churchtown, Dublin 14	Dublin 14
19723V	Urban	Queen Of Angels Primary School	Wedgewood, Dundrum, Dublin 16	Dublin 16
19566I	Urban	Our Lady Queen Of Apostles	Queen Of Apostles NS, Clonburris, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19502F	Urban	Scoil Aenghusa Jun NS	Balrothery, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Roll No.	Urban	School Name	Address	County
19576L	Urban	S N Aenghusa	Scoil N Aenghusa Sin, Balrothery, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19582G	Urban	St Maelruains N S	Kilclare Avenue, Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19646G	Urban	Scoil Santain	Bothar Na Habhann Mor, Tamhlacht, Ath Cliath 24	Dublin 24
19878E	Urban	Ballycragh N S	Ballycragh, Firhouse, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19950J	Urban	St Dominics N S	Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
17221K	Urban	SN Colmcille	An Caislean An Gearr, Gaillimh	Galway
17282H	Urban	Scoil Na Mbraithre	Tuam, Co Galway	Galway
18042P	Urban	Presentation Convent	Tuam, Co Galway	Galway
19401W	Urban	S N Caitriona Sois	Renmore, Co Galway	Galway
19468I	Urban	Scoil Chaitriona Senior	Renmore, Galway	Galway
19795A	Urban	Tirellan Heights N S	Headford Road, Galway	Galway
13530D	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Moyderwell	Tobar Mui Doire, Traili, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
16703A	Urban	Scoil Na Mbraithre	An Daingean, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
16871V	Urban	S N An Chroi Naofa	Traighli, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
20013U	Urban	Gaelscoil Lios Tuathail	Lios Tuathail, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
20158A	Urban	Tralee Educate Together	Collis Sandes House, Killeen Oakpark, Tralee, Co. Kerry	Kerry
12747A	Urban	Kildare Monastery N S	Kildare, Co Kildare	Kildare
15599D	Urban	St Brigids Primary School	Kildare, Co. Kildare	Kildare
16705E	Urban	Scoil Phadraig Naofa	Lana Eoin Naofa, Ath-I, Co. Chill Dara	Kildare
18288B	Urban	Scoil Mhichil Naofa	Athy, Co Kildare	Kildare
19452Q	Urban	Scoil Mhuire	Newbridge, Co. Kildare.	Kildare
19550Q	Urban	Ballymany Junior NS	Newbridge, Co Kildare	Kildare
17108O	Urban	St JohNS Infants N S	Kilkenny, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
20011Q	Urban	St. Johns Senior School	Ballyborough Street, Kilkenny, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
18822S	Urban	St Marys N.S.	Summerhill, Carrick -On-Shannon, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
00851C	Urban	Presentation Convent	Ballymakenny Road, Drogheda, Co Louth	Louth
17059E	Urban	Scoil Na Mbraithre SN	Geata An Domhnaigh, Droichead Atha, Co Lui	Louth
17949O	Urban	Scoil Padraig Naofa	Bothar Brugha, Drogheda, Co Louth	Louth
18098T	Urban	Scoil Bhríde	Bothar Brugha, Drogheda	Louth
18347O	Urban	S N San Nioclas	Nicholas St, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
19892V	Urban	Gaelscoil Dhun Dealgan	Muirtheimhne Mor, Dun Dealgan, Co Lu	Louth
20084U	Urban	Gaelscoil Bheal An Atha	Corrai Mhuireann, Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
17969U	Urban	S N Mhuire	An Uaimh, Co Na Mi	Meath
19476H	Urban	St Oliver Plunkett NS	Navan, Co Meath	Meath
20180Q	Urban	Scoil Naomh Eoin	Clonmagadden Valley, Windtown, Navan, Co Meath	Meath
16202B	Urban	Convent of Mercy	Castleblaney, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
16319W	Urban	Castleblaney Con Infts	Castleblaney, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
17686I	Urban	Scoil Mhuire B	Castleblaney, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
03220F	Urban	Mercy Primary School	Birr, Co Offaly	Offaly
12370C	Urban	St Brendans Monastery	Birr, Co Offaly	Offaly
13118U	Urban	Clara Convent N S	Clara, Co Offaly	Offaly
16928B	Urban	S N Naomh Philomena	Tullamore, Co Offaly	Offaly
18406E	Urban	Scoil Phroinsias Noafa	Clara, Co Offaly	Offaly
18524K	Urban	S N Naomh Brighde Buach	Tullamore, Co Offaly	Offaly
18797W	Urban	S N Naomh Seosamh	Arden View, Tullamore, Co Offaly	Offaly
13198V	Urban	St Annes Con N S	Castlerea, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
19980S	Urban	St Attractas N S	Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
17277O	Urban	St Edwards N S	Ballytivnan, Sligo	Sligo

Roll No.	Urban	School Name	Address	County
19985F	Urban	Our Lady Of Mercy N S	Pearse Road, Sligo	Sligo
20019J	Urban	Holy Family School	Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo	Sligo
01594N	Urban	St John's	Roscrea, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
16729S	Urban	St Peter And Paul	Clonmel, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
16979S	Urban	St Colmcille's Primary	Templemore, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
17731K	Urban	S N Iosef Naofa	Templemore, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
18435L	Urban	Sacred Heart Primary School	Newline, Roscrea, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
15046I	Urban	St Stephens NS	25 Patrick Street, Waterford	Waterford
16732H	Urban	Scoil Naomh Seosamh	Dungarvan, Co Waterford	Waterford
18462O	Urban	Scoil Lorcaín BNS	Ballytruckle, Waterford	Waterford
18509O	Urban	An Teaghlaigh Naofa	Clochar Na Trocaire, Port Lairge	Waterford
18689T	Urban	Our lady of Mercy Snr Primery	Military Rd, Waterford	Waterford
19947U	Urban	Mount Sion Cbs N S	Barrack Street, Waterford	Waterford
19953P	Urban	St Marys NS	Dungarvan, Co Waterford	Waterford
19955T	Urban	S N Na Toirbhirte	Clocar Na Toirbhirte, Waterford	Waterford
20219R	Urban	St Pauls B N S	Lisduggan, Waterford	Waterford
20073P	Urban	St Marys NS	Gracepark Rd, Athlone, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
20188J	Urban	Mullingar Educate Together	Mullingar Rugby Club, Cullion, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	Westmeath
03633H	Urban	S N Bun Cloidi B	Bun Cloidi, Co Loch Gorman	Wexford
11361T	Urban	St John of God	The Faythe, Co Wexford	Wexford
11986N	Urban	Convent Of Mercy	Pairc An Chinneideach, Loch Garman	Wexford
12372G	Urban	Michael St N S	Michael St, New Ross, Co Wexford	Wexford
16741I	Urban	Scoil Na Mbraithre	New Ross, Co Wexford	Wexford
17457Q	Urban	St. Josephs	New Ross, Co Wexford	Wexford
02276E	Urban	An T Inbhear Mor B N S	Arklow, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
16591P	Urban	Newtownmountkennedy Con	Newtownmountkennedy, Greystones, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
18732R	Urban	Naomh Seosamh BNS	Newtownmountkennedy, Greystones, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
19508R	Urban	St Fergals Junior NS	Ballywaltrim, Bray, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
19654F	Urban	St Fergals Senior NS	Ballywaltrim, Bray, Co Wicklow	Wicklow

Roll No.	Rural	School Name	Address	County
17096K	Rural	S N Nmh Fhingín	Garryhill, Muinebheag, Co Carlow	Carlow
17127S	Rural	St Josephs NS	Hacketstown, Co Carlow	Carlow
17555Q	Rural	Scoil Naomh Abban	Crettyard, Carlow, Co Carlow	Carlow
18265M	Rural	Bhride N S	Ard Duach, Carlow, Co Carlow	Carlow
01356U	Rural	Kilnaleck Mixed N S	Kilnaleck, Co Cavan	Cavan
06998Q	Rural	S N Tulach A Mhíle	Corlough, Belturbet, Co Cavan	Cavan
08143P	Rural	S N Mhuire	Muileann Iarainn, Swanlinbar, Co Cavan	Cavan
14339S	Rural	Achad An Measa	S N Achadh Easa, Achadh Easa, An Chorr Dubh, Co Cabhan	Cavan
17479D	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Lacken, Ballinagh, Co Cavan	Cavan
19363R	Rural	Mullahoran Central N S	Kilcogy, Via Longford, Co Cavan	Cavan
03928D	Rural	Mullach N S	Mullach, Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
08241P	Rural	Scropul NS	Mullagh, Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
10191P	Rural	S N Na Coradh	Mullach, Inis, Co Clare	Clare
12848G	Rural	Doonaha N S	Kilkee, Co Clare	Clare
15221A	Rural	Annagh N S	Miltown Malbay, Co Clare	Clare
15968I	Rural	Baltard N S	Baltard, Doonbeg, Kilrush, Co Clare	Clare
16359L	Rural	Ennistymon Convent N S	Ennistymon, Co Clare	Clare
16870T	Rural	Scoil Na Mbraithre	Ennistymon, Co Clare	Clare

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Roll No.	Rural	School Name	Address	County
17020A	Rural	Quilty NS	Quilty, Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
20078C	Rural	SN Realt Na Mara	Chapel St, Kilkee, Co Clare	Clare
04268P	Rural	Clochiar Na Toirbhirte, Doneraile	Co Cork	Cork
07101R	Rural	Inchiclough N S	Bantry, Co Cork	Cork
09815U	Rural	Tullaslease Mixed N S	Rathluirc, Co Cork	Cork
11262R	Rural	Druimne N S	Rathluirc, Co Cork	Cork
13543M	Rural	Derrinacahara N S	Dunmanway, Co Cork	Cork
13976U	Rural	St Matthias N S	Church Road, Ballydehob, Co Cork	Cork
14065H	Rural	Sherkin Island N S	Baltimore, Co Cork	Cork
14227H	Rural	Kilcoe NS	Skibbereen, Co Cork	Cork
14303U	Rural	S N Cleire	Oilean Chleire, An Sciobairin, Co Chorcaí	Cork
17011W	Rural	Mocomhog N S	Cappaboy, Kealkil, Bantry, Co Cork	Cork
17112F	Rural	Ballyhea N S	Ballyhea, Rathluirc, Co Cork	Cork
17281F	Rural	Togher N S	Dunmanway, Co Cork	Cork
19501D	Rural	Cahermore New Central S	Cahermore, Co Cork	Cork
19507P	Rural	Scoil Chaitigheirn	Na Haorai, Beantraí, Co Chorcaí	Cork
19525R	Rural	Mhichil Naofa	Ballinakilla, Bere Island, Bantry, Co Cork	Cork
19989N	Rural	Scoil Mhuire Na Trocaire	Cill Na Mullach, Co Chorcaí	Cork
20004T	Rural	Scoil An Croi Ro Naofa	Co. Cork.	Cork
20049S	Rural	Ringaskiddy Lower Harbour N S	Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork.	Cork
01733B	Rural	Ardara Mixed N S	Ardara, Co Donegal	Donegal
03294L	Rural	Scoil Chaiseal Na gCorr	Gort A Choirce, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na nGall	Donegal
04809A	Rural	Scoil An Aingil Choimheadai	An Cheididh, Burtonport, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
05164I	Rural	Scoil Naomh Cholmcille	Oilean Thorai, An Bhun Bhig, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
07143K	Rural	Monreagh N S	Monreagh, Carrigans Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
07626H	Rural	S N An Iorball Riabaigh	Baile Ui Ghormain, Lethbhearr, Tir Chonaill	Donegal
09748I	Rural	Glenmaquin No 2 N S	Knockbrack, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
10062E	Rural	Creelough N S	Creelough, Co Donegal	Donegal
13563S	Rural	S N Chill Coinnigh	Cill Choinnigh, Glenties, Co Donegal	Donegal
13755E	Rural	Gartan N S	Gartan, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
14194S	Rural	Scoil Cholmcille	An Tearmann, Co Dun Na Ngall	Donegal
14502D	Rural	Scoil Mhuire B&C	Doire Beaga, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
14631O	Rural	Scoil Cholmchille	Malin, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
14704P	Rural	Murroe National School	Murroe, Dunfanahy, Co Donegal	Donegal
15208I	Rural	S N Na Sraithe Moire	Min A Labain, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
15532R	Rural	Croaghross N S	Portsalon, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
15554E	Rural	Gortnacart N S	Gortnacart, Ardara, Co Donegal	Donegal
15729N	Rural	Rathmullen N S	Rathmullen, Co Donegal	Donegal
15955W	Rural	SN Arainn Mhor I	Arainn Mor, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
16138S	Rural	Raphoe Central N S	Raphoe, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
16142J	Rural	S N Min Na Manrach	An Clochan Liath, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
16279N	Rural	Scoil Cholmchille	Ballyheerin, Fanad, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
16349I	Rural	S N An Droim Mor	An Droim Mor, Killygordon, Co Donegal	Donegal
16375J	Rural	Frosses N S	Frosses, Inver, Co Donegal	Donegal
16384K	Rural	SN Arainn Mhor II	Arainn Mhor, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
16471F	Rural	St Davadogs N S	Tamney, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
16603T	Rural	S N An Chillin	An Cillin, Inver, Co Donegal	Donegal
16671N	Rural	Cnoc Na Niamh	Gortahork, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal

Roll No.	Rural	School Name	Address	County
16820E	Rural	SN Baile Nua An Phobail	Newtowncunningham, Co Donegal	Donegal
16823K	Rural	Min A Ghabhann N S	Lettermacaward, Donegal	Donegal
16829W	Rural	S N Loch An Iubhair	Anaigaire, Leitir Ceanainn, Tir Chonaill	Donegal
16836T	Rural	Naomh Bridhid	Glenmakee, Carndonagh, Co Donegal	Donegal
16837V	Rural	S N Duchoraidh	Duchoraidh, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
16850N	Rural	St Garvan's NS	Drum Halla, Rathmaolain, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
16880W	Rural	Craigtown NS	Craigtown, Carndonagh, Co Donegal	Donegal
16995Q	Rural	S N Naomh Colmchille	Drumoghill NS, Manorcunningham, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
17018N	Rural	Scoil Phadraig	Dobhar, An Bun Beag, Leitirceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17130H	Rural	Scoil Naomh Dubhthach	Machaire Ui Rabhartaigh, Gort A Choirce, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17328F	Rural	Scoil Roisin	An Clochan Liath, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17447N	Rural	S N Crannaighe Buidhe	Crannog Bui, Ardara, Co Donegal	Donegal
17469A	Rural	Scoil Colm Cille	Ballindrait, Lifford, Co. Donegal	Donegal
17503U	Rural	S N Adhamhnain	Luinneach, Doiri Beaga, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17549V	Rural	S N Ceathru Caol	Kerrykeel, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
17552K	Rural	Scoil Bhrighde	Porthall, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
17553M	Rural	S N Taodhbhog	An Clochan, Leifearr, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17564R	Rural	S N An Choimin	Clochan, Leithbhearr, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17598L	Rural	SN An Leimbh Iosa	Coxtown, Carrigans, Co Donegal	Donegal
17704H	Rural	S N Fhionnain	Baile Chonaill, An Falcarrach, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17716O	Rural	St Riaghans	Drimnacrosch, Kilraine PO, Co Donegal	Donegal
17721H	Rural	Scoil Treasa Naofa	Malainn, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
17729A	Rural	Scoil Naomh Proinnseas	Magherabeg, Manorcunningham, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	Donegal
17822N	Rural	Scoil Bhrighde	Min A Chladhaigh, Gort A Choirce, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17828C	Rural	Scoil Adhamhnain	Rathbhoth, Leithbhearr, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17837D	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Pettigo, Co Donegal	Donegal
18086M	Rural	Dunfanaghy N S	Dunfanaghy, Co Donegal	Donegal
18114O	Rural	S N Naomh Eighneach	Diseart Eighnigh, Buncrannach, Co Dun Na Ngall	Donegal
18131O	Rural	S N Muire Gan Smal	Ard Aratha, Co Dun Na Ngall	Donegal
18151U	Rural	S N Mhuire	Baile An Ngalloglach, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
18219F	Rural	SN Chonaill	Machaire Chlochair, Bun Beag, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
18241V	Rural	Scoil Cholmcille	Ramilton, Co Donegal	Donegal
18250W	Rural	S N Baile Mor	Dunfanaghy PO, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
18286U	Rural	S N Na Hacrai	Ailt An Chorrain, Leitirceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
18295V	Rural	S N Min An Aoire	An Charraig, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
18371L	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	An Craosloch, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
18421A	Rural	SN Dun Ceannfhaolaidh	Dun Ceannfhaolaidh, Co Donegal	Donegal
18446Q	Rural	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	Ceann Mhalanna, Ballygorman Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
18517N	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Dristearnain, Gleneely Po Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
18611F	Rural	S N Na Carraige	Dun Na Ngall, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
18652T	Rural	Scoil an Chaisil	Caisil, Glenn Cholmcille, Co Donegal	Donegal
18710H	Rural	SN Na Croise Naofa	Dunfanaghy, Co Donegal	Donegal
18766L	Rural	Scoil Cholmcille	Dubhlin Riabach, Carraig Airt, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
19009W	Rural	Craanford N S	Craanford, Co Donegal	Donegal

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Roll No.	Rural	School Name	Address	County
19228L	Rural	S N Naomh Brid	Na Dunaibh, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
19252I	Rural	S N Umlach	Carrigart, Co Donegal	Donegal
19310T	Rural	Scoil Naomh Earnan	Baile An Tsratha, Co Donegal	Donegal
19343L	Rural	S N Dhubhthaigh	Anagaire, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
19491D	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Rathmealltain, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
19518U	Rural	S N Naomh Baoithin	Sc Naomh Baoithin, St Johnston, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
19614Q	Rural	Naomh Bodain	Culdaff, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
19685Q	Rural	Scoil Chartha Naofa	Chill Chartha, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
19756N	Rural	St Conals NS	Narin, Portnoo, Co Donegal	Donegal
19912B	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Glenties, Co Donegal	Donegal
19693P	Rural	Mary Queen Of Ireland N S	Toberburr, Co Dublin	Dublin
09833W	Rural	S N Leitirgeis	Leitirgeis N S, Rinn An Mhaoil, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
10591I	Rural	S N An Ard Mhoir	Carna, Conamara, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
11261P	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	An Tuairin, Beal An Daingin, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
11290W	Rural	S N Muire Gan Smal	Camas, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
11373D	Rural	S N Mhuire	Turlach Beag, Rosmuc, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
12502Q	Rural	S N Eanna	Roundstone, Co Galway	Galway
13174H	Rural	St Columbas N.S.	Inishturk, Co Galway	Galway
13416F	Rural	S N Leitir Meallain	Leitir Meallain, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
13528Q	Rural	SN Oilean Droim	Leitir Mor, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
13621G	Rural	S N Muire	Letterfrack, Co Galway	Galway
13699U	Rural	S N Colmcille	Lettermore, Co Galway	Galway
13821O	Rural	SN na Naomh Uile	Cleggan, Co Galway	Galway
13927H	Rural	Inishbofin N S	Inishbofin, Co Galway	Galway
13951E	Rural	S N Leitir Mucu	Camas, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
13952G	Rural	S N Bhríde	Leitir Caladh, Lettermore, Co Galway	Galway
14420B	Rural	S N Naomh Padraig	Tully, Renvyle, Co Galway	Galway
14421D	Rural	S N Ard	Aird Thiar, Carna, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
14724V	Rural	Scoil Ronain	Oilean Tra Bhan, Leitir Mor, Gaillimh	Galway
16982H	Rural	S N Ath Eascrach Chuain	Beal Atha Na Sluagh, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17095I	Rural	S N Na Cealltraighe	Kinclare, Cealltrach Ballinasloe, Co Galway	Galway
17289V	Rural	S N Caomhain	Inis Oirthir, Arainn, Gaillimh	Galway
17463L	Rural	S N Briocain	An Gort Mor, Rosmuc, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17488E	Rural	SN An Aill Bhreach	Baile Conaola, Connamara, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17574U	Rural	S N Naomh Ciarain	Cill Chiarain, Conamara, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17655U	Rural	S N Caladh Na Muc	Ros Cathail, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17660N	Rural	S N Naomh Treasa	Caiseal, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17689O	Rural	S N Tir An Fhiaidh	Leitir Mor, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17770U	Rural	S N Naomh Colmain	Carna, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
18121L	Rural	S N Mhuire	Carna, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
18211M	Rural	S N Ciarain Naofa	Cill Liathan Newbridge, Ballinasloe, Co Galway	Galway
18441G	Rural	Scoil Naomh Chuan	Cill Iomair, Beal Atha Na Sluagh, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
18514H	Rural	S N Choilm Chille	Baile Na Habhann, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
18608Q	Rural	S N Muire Gan Smal	Cladach Dubh, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
19290Q	Rural	Ballyconeely N S	Clifden, Co Galway	Galway
19818J	Rural	Creggs Central N S	Creegs, Via Roscommon, Co Galway	Galway
19932H	Rural	SN Mhic Dara	An Ceathru Rua, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
19973V	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Clifden, Co Galway	Galway
05348S	Rural	Scoil Eoin	Tahilla, Sneem, Co. Kerry	Kerry

Roll No.	Rural	School Name	Address	County
08251S	Rural	Scoil Naomh Micheal	Sneem, Co Kerry	Kerry
08687J	Rural	S N Muire Gan Smal	Na Corra, Cathair Saibhin, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
11419B	Rural	Scoil Bhreanainn	Portmagee, Co Kerry	Kerry
12820H	Rural	Scoil Realt Na Mara	Cromane, Killorglin, Co Kerry	Kerry
12875J	Rural	Douglas National School	Killorglin, Co Kerry	Kerry
13233U	Rural	S N Naomh Ioseph	Doon Road, Ballybunion, Co Kerry	Kerry
13542K	Rural	Cahirciveen Convent	Cahirciveen, Co Kerry	Kerry
15978L	Rural	Curraheen Mxd N S	Glenbeigh, Co Kerry	Kerry
16456J	Rural	Scoil Naisiunta Eirc	Baile An Mhoraigh, Baile Na Ngall, Tra Li, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
16702V	Rural	Sc Mhuire Na Mbraithre	Caherciveen, Co Kerry	Kerry
16744O	Rural	Boheshill Mxd	Glencar, Co Kerry	Kerry
16851P	Rural	Ballybunion B N S	Ballybunion, Co Kerry	Kerry
17161S	Rural	Kiltallagh N S	Kiltallagh, Castlemaine, Co Kerry	Kerry
17915U	Rural	Freastogail Mhuire Mxd	Killahan, Abbeydorney, Co Kerry	Kerry
18283O	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Sc Mhuire BroSNach, Tra Li, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
18414D	Rural	S N Gleann Beithe	Glenbeigh, Co Kerry	Kerry
19483E	Rural	S N Dar Earca	Ballyhearney, Valentia, Co Kerry	Kerry
19805A	Rural	Ballyduff Central	Ballyduff, Tralee, Co Kerry	Kerry
13165G	Rural	Kilberry N S	Athy, Co Kildare	Kildare
18449W	Rural	St Conleths N S	Derrinturn, Carbury, Co. Kildare	Kildare
19425N	Rural	Ballyroe Central N S	Athy, Co Kildare	Kildare
16311G	Rural	Graig Na Manach Buac	Graigenamanagh, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
17224Q	Rural	S N Muire Gan Smal	Graigenamanagh, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
17692D	Rural	Sraid Bhaile Boys N S	Sraid Bhaile, Co Laois	Laois
14898I	Rural	Drumeela N S	Carrigallen Po, Co Leitrim, Via Cavan	Leitrim
15116D	Rural	Ardvarney Mxd N S	Dromahair, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
16474L	Rural	Carrigallen N S	Carrigallen, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
16951T	Rural	S N Na Craoibheleithe	Drumkeeran, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
17125O	Rural	Differeen N S	Manorhamilton, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
18139H	Rural	S N Naomh Padraig	Tearmon Spencer Harbour, Carrick-On-Shannon, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
18741S	Rural	Faitima N S	Cluana, Carrick On Shannon, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
19365V	Rural	Achadh Na Sileann	Achadh Na Sileann, Cora Droma Ruisc, Co Liatroma	Leitrim
20203C	Rural	S N Naomh Sheosamh	Mohill, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
14305B	Rural	Ballylanders NS	Ballylanders, Kilmallock, Co Limerick	Limerick
16713D	Rural	Scoil Na Mbraithre, Doon, Co Limerick	Limerick	Limerick
17065W	Rural	Cappaghmore B N S	Cappamore, Co Limerick	Limerick
17293M	Rural	Scoil Ioseph Naofa	Ballyorgan, Kilfinane, Co Luimni	Limerick
17593B	Rural	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	Cnoc Ui Coileain, Abbeyfeale, Co Limerick	Limerick
05115S	Rural	S N An Leana Mor	An Leana Mor, Co Longford	Longford
13320P	Rural	Fermoye Mixed N S	Fermoye, Lanesboro, Co Longford	Longford
16665S	Rural	St Marys Mixed N S	Drumlish, Longford, Co Longford	Longford
19279F	Rural	S N Naomh Treasa	Clontumper, Ballinalee, Co Longford	Longford
20124G	Rural	St Marys N.S	Edgeworthstown, Edgeworthstown, Co Longford	Longford
20128O	Rural	St Matthews Mixed N.S	Ballymahon, Co Longford	Longford
18001B	Rural	S N Naomh Lorcan	Omeath, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
04796R	Rural	Brackloon N.S.	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
05120L	Rural	Lehinch N S	Hollymount, Co Mayo	Mayo
06852L	Rural	Garracloon N S	Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
11582M	Rural	S N Deirble	Beal Dearg, Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
11725I	Rural	Beheymore N S	Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Roll No.	Rural	School Name	Address	County
12373I	Rural	S N Eachleime	Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
12569C	Rural	S N Ros Dumhach	Beal Atha An Fheadha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
13222P	Rural	SN Gleann A Chaisil	Bun Na Habhna, Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
13225V	Rural	Cormaic Nfa	Garranard P O, Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
13383Q	Rural	S N An Tsraith	Bun Na Habhann, Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
13555T	Rural	S N Faitche	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
13667H	Rural	SN Muine Chonallain	Beal An Atha, Co Mayo	Mayo
13684H	Rural	Beannchor N S	Bangor, Erris, Co Mayo	Mayo
13758K	Rural	Templemary N S	Templemary NS, Killala, Co Mayo	Mayo
13781F	Rural	Breaffy N S	Castlebar, Co Mayo	Mayo
13882L	Rural	S N Gleann Na Muaidhe	Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
14064F	Rural	S N Coill An Bhaile	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
14188A	Rural	Barnatra N S	Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
14193Q	Rural	S N Dubh Thuama	Gaoth Saile, Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
14258S	Rural	Cill Mhor Iorrais	Beal An Mhuirthead, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
14290O	Rural	Scoil Naomh Brid	Ballycastle, Co Mayo	Mayo
14418O	Rural	Bofield Mixed N S	Attymass, Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
14671D	Rural	S N Na Craobhaighe	Carrowmore-Lacken, Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
14863M	Rural	Achill Sound Convent NS	Achill Sound, Co Mayo	Mayo
14866S	Rural	SN Beal A Bhulain	Bun An Chorraigh, Cathair Na Mart, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
14873P	Rural	Dookinella N.S.	Keel, Achill, Co Mayo	Mayo
15014S	Rural	Corclough NS	Corchloch, Beal An Mhuirthid, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
15030Q	Rural	St Marys N S	Aghamore, Ballyhaunis, Co Mayo	Mayo
15032U	Rural	S N Muire Gan Smal	Ceathru Thaidgh, Beal Atha An Fheadha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
15113U	Rural	S N Sheamais	Barnacogue, Swinford, Co Mayo	Mayo
15539I	Rural	St JohNS NS	Lugboy, Claremorris, Co Mayo	Mayo
15866A	Rural	Carrakennedy N S	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
16052I	Rural	S N Naomh Padraig Saile	Gob A Choire, Acaill, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
16113C	Rural	SN Thoin na Gaoithe	Thoin na Gaoithe, Cathair na Mart, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
16122D	Rural	Knock N S	Claremorris, Co Mayo	Mayo
16173U	Rural	Kinaffe N S	Swinford, Co Mayo	Mayo
16283E	Rural	S N Pol A Tsomais	Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
16289Q	Rural	St Johns NS	Carramore, Swinford, Co Mayo	Mayo
16295L	Rural	Currane NS	Gobachoire, Co Mhaigh Eo, Mayo	
16379R	Rural	Valley N S	Dugort, Achill, Co Mayo	Mayo
16618J	Rural	Myna N S	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
16811D	Rural	Killala N S	Killala, Co Mayo	Mayo
16904K	Rural	S N Lainn Cille	Cathair Na Mart, Co Mayo	Mayo
17129W	Rural	St Patricks NS	Rath Na mBeach, Crossmolina, Co Mayo	Mayo
17176I	Rural	S N Realt Na Mara	Mulranny, Co Mayo	Mayo
17321O	Rural	S N An Coill Mhor	Newport, Co Mayo	Mayo
17483R	Rural	Carraholly N S	Cathair Na Mart, Co Mayo	Mayo
17532E	Rural	S N Druim Slaod	Baile Cruaich, Cathair Na Mart, Co Mayo	Mayo
17562N	Rural	SN Oilean Eadaigh	Caislean A Bharraigh, Co Mayo	Mayo
17727T	Rural	SN Croi Muire	Beal An Mhuirthid, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
17923T	Rural	S N Beal An Mhuirthead	Beal An Mhuirthead, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
18002D	Rural	Drumgallagh N S	Ballycro, Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
18082E	Rural	S N Dumhach	Cathair Na Mart, Co Mayo	Mayo
18175L	Rural	S N Beannchair	Carrowmore, Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo

Roll No.	Rural	School Name	Address	County
18594I	Rural	S N Achaidh An Ghlaisin	Beal An Mhuirthead, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
18712L	Rural	S N Cnoc Ruscaighe	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
18754E	Rural	SN Naomh Seosamh	Bun An Chorraigh, Cathair Na Mart, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
18848N	Rural	S N Peadair Agus Pol	Straide, Foxford, Co Mayo	Mayo
19324H	Rural	S N Teaghlaigh Naofa	SN Teaghlaigh Naofa, Killeen, Louisburgh, Co Mayo	Mayo
19451O	Rural	Newport Central	Baile Ui Bhfiachain, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
19488O	Rural	Scoil Naomh Feichin	SN Ath Ti Mheasaigh, Beal Atha An Fheadha, Co Mhaigheo	Mayo
19776T	Rural	Geesala Central School	Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
20037L	Rural	S N Padraig Naofa	Louisburgh, Co Mayo	Mayo
20217N	Rural	Mount Palmer NS	Kincon, Ballina, Co. Mayo	Mayo
18429Q	Rural	S N Mhuire	Cul Ronain, Baile Iomhair, Co Meath	Meath
00373P	Rural	Deravoy National School	Deravoy, Emyvale, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
10429W	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Rockcorry, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
18234B	Rural	Scoil Naomh Padraig	Eo-Dhruim, Castleblaney, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
18482U	Rural	Mhuire Gransla	Leachtgallon, Cluain Eois, Co Muineachain	Monaghan
19362P	Rural	St Patricks NS	Clara, Killybrone, Emyvale, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
20055N	Rural	Gaelscoil Eois	Eanach Cille, An Chuil Darach, Co Mhuineachain	Monaghan
05913A	Rural	Kilcormac Convent N S	Kilcormac, Co Offaly	Offaly
12343W	Rural	Shinrone Mixed N S	Shinrone, Co Offaly	Offaly
17069H	Rural	S N Muire Naofa	Pollach, Rahan, Tullamore, Co Offaly	Offaly
17359Q	Rural	St Cormacs N S	Kilcormac, Co Offaly	Offaly
20068W	Rural	St Marys National School	Cloghan, Birr, Co Offaly	Offaly
01866U	Rural	Ballyforan Mixed N S	Ballinasloe, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
02327S	Rural	Mantua N S	Castlereaa, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
07455G	Rural	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal	Ballygar, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
12767G	Rural	S N Ronain Naofa	Cloonloo, Boyle, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
13047A	Rural	S N Lios A Cuill M	Castlereaa, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
15255R	Rural	Don N S	Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
15425Q	Rural	Fairymount NS	Castlereaa, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
15543W	Rural	Tibohine N S	Castlereaa, Roscommon	Roscommon
15664L	Rural	Granlahan G N S	Ballinlough, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
17266J	Rural	Ballanagare N S	Castlereaa, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
17748E	Rural	S N Padraig Naofa	Dungar, Caisleain Riabhach, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
18165I	Rural	Tisrara National School	Tigh Srathra, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
18536R	Rural	S N Mhuire Lourdes	Loch Glinne, Castlereaa, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
18543O	Rural	S N Clochog	Castlealdwin, Boyle, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
19651W	Rural	Carracastle Central NS	Carracastle, Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
19809I	Rural	Abbeycarton NS	Elphin, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
03924S	Rural	Owenbeg N S	Owenbeg P O, Ballina, Co Sligo	Sligo
12140I	Rural	Culleens N S	Culleens, Co Sligo	Sligo
13242V	Rural	Castlerock N S	Aclare, Co Sligo	Sligo
13944H	Rural	S N Naomh Atrachta	Kilmactigue, Aclare, Co Sligo	Sligo
16793E	Rural	Mary Immaculate NS	Collooney, Co Sligo	Sligo
17718S	Rural	S N Seosamh Naofa	Cul Mhaoile, Sligo	Sligo
18298E	Rural	S N Cul Fada	Cul Fada, Ballymote, Co Sligo	Sligo
19392B	Rural	Scoil Naomh Aodain	Scoil Aodain, Mainistir Readhain, Co Shligigh	Sligo
19688W	Rural	Dromore West Central	Dromore West, Sligo	Sligo
20113B	Rural	Scoil Croi Naofa	Bunninadden, Ballymote, Co. Sligo	Sligo
13210I	Rural	St Josephs National School	Ballinagarry, Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
14791N	Rural	Cappawhite N S	Cappawhite, Co Tipperary	Tipperary

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Roll No.	Rural	School Name	Address	County
15299O	Rural	Gaile N S	Holycross, Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
15362S	Rural	S N Michil Naofa	Mullinahone, Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
17498H	Rural	S N Naomh Sheosamh	Toomevara, Nenagh, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
17665A	Rural	S N Gleann Guail	Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
18343G	Rural	S N Chaoimhghin	Baile Dhaith (Littleton), Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
19356U	Rural	Killenaule N S	Killenaule, Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
18077L	Rural	S N Cnoc Machan	Bun Machan, Co Waterford	Waterford
01731U	Rural	Ballynacargy Mixed N S	Ballynacargy, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
17991N	Rural	Eoin Naofa N S	Ballymore, Mullingar, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
18591C	Rural	Naomh Tomas N S	Rathowen, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
06959G	Rural	Clonroche N S	Clonroche, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Wexford
14668O	Rural	Ballaghkeene N S	Ballaghkeene, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Wexford
17117P	Rural	S N Cul Greine	Coolgreany, Gorey, Co Wexford	Wexford
17194K	Rural	S N Baile Ui Coileain	Ballycullane, New Ross, Co Wexford	Wexford
17443F	Rural	S N Fionntain	Taghmon, Co Wexford	Wexford
17638U	Rural	S N Nmh Seosaimh	Dunard, Poll Na Peiste, Cluain Na Roistigh, Co Loch Gorman	Wexford
17707N	Rural	S N Rath An Iubhair	Rath An Iubhair, Iniscortaigh, Co Loch Gorman	Wexford
17734Q	Rural	S N Gallbhaile	Ballyhogue, Gallbhaile, Inis Corthaidh, Co Loch Garman	Wexford
17769M	Rural	S N Mhuire	Tagoat, Co Wexford	Wexford
17841R	Rural	SN Mhuire	Ballyhogue, Bree, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Wexford
19352M	Rural	Sc Nais Realta Na Mara	An Chill Mhor, Co Loch Garman	Wexford
00984V	Rural	Glenealy 1 N S	Glenealy, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
16874E	Rural	S N Naomh Iosef G	Rathnew, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
17669I	Rural	S N Treasa Naomha	Cill Teagain, Co Cille Manntain	Wicklow
18962L	Rural	St Ernans B N S	Rathnew, Co Wicklow	Wicklow

Roll No.	Name	Address	County
70420R	Carlow Vocational School	Kilkenny Road, Carlow	Carlow
70430U	Vocational School Muine Beag	Muine Bheag, Carlow	Carlow
70360C	St. Mogue's College	Bawnboy, Co Cavan	Cavan
70380I	Cavan Vocational School	Cootehill Rd, Cavan	Cavan
70830N	Ennis Community College	Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
91448K	Kilrush Community School	Kilrush, Co Clare	Clare
62530F	North Monastery Secondary School	Our Lady's Mount, North Monastery Road, Cork	Cork
62540I	Deerpark C.B.S.	St Patrick's Road, Cork	Cork
70910L	St. Brogan's College	Kilbrogan, Bandon, Co Cork	Cork
70970G	Cobh Community College	Carrignafoy, Cobh, Co Cork	Cork
70990M	Coláiste an Chraoibhin	Duntaheen Road, Fermoy, Co Cork	Cork
71020G	Davis College	Annabella, Mallow, Co Cork	Cork
71030J	McEgan College	Macroom, Co Cork	Cork
71040M	St Fanahan's College	Mitchelstown, Co Cork	Cork
71050P	St Colman's Community College	Youghal Road, Middleton, Co Cork	Cork
71080B	Mannix College	Charleville, Co Cork	Cork
71090E	Rossa College	Skibbereen, Co Cork	Cork
71123Q	Terence Mac Swiney Community College	Hollyhill, Knocknaheeny, Cork	Cork
76067L	Colaiste Pobail Naomh Mhuire	Cill na Mullach, Co Cork	Cork
91397T	Bishopstown Community School	Bishopstown, Co Cork	Cork

Roll No.	Name	Address	County
91400F	Mayfield Community School	Old Youghal Road, Cork	Cork
62621I	North Presentation	Farranree, Cork City	Cork City
62650P	Ursuline Secondary School	Blackrock, Cork City	Cork City
62730N	St Patricks College	Gardiner's Hill, Cork City	Cork City
71110H	Nagle Community College	Mahon, Cork City	Cork City
62770C	Scoil Mhuire	St. Oran's Road, Buncrana, Co Donegal	Donegal
71140Q	Crana College	Crana Road, Buncrana, Co Donegal	Donegal
71200I	Letterkenny Vocational School	Windyhall, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
71220O	Mulroy College	Milford, Co Donegal	Donegal
71230R	Deele College	Raphoe, Co Donegal	Donegal
71240U	Vocational School	Main Street, Stranorlar, Co Donegal	Donegal
71242B	Gairm Scoil Chú Uladh	Béal an Átha Móir, Co Dhun na nGall	Donegal
71244F	Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada	An Leadhgarbh, Co Dhun na nGall	Donegal
76084L	Moville Community College	Carrownaff, Moville, Co Donegal	Donegal
81011L	The Royal and Prior School	Raphoe, Co Donegal	Donegal
91406R	Carndonagh Community School	Carndonagh, Co Donegal	Donegal
91407T	Rosses Community School	Dungloe, Co Donegal	Donegal
60440R	O'Connell School	North Richmond Street, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
60853T	Mount Carmel Secondary School	Kings Inn Street, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
76077O	Larkin Community College	1 Champions Avenue, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
60490J	C.B.S. Westland Row	Westland Row, Dublin 2	Dublin 02
60390F	St Josephs C.B.S.	Merville Ave, Fairview, Dublin 3	Dublin 03
70250S	Marino College	14-20 Marino Mart, Fairview, Dublin 3	Dublin 03
60500J	Marian College	Ballsbridge, Dublin 4	Dublin 04
70200D	Technical Institute	Cambridge Road, Ringsend, Dublin 4	Dublin 04
60471F	St. David's C.B.S.	Malahide Road, Artane, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
60550B	Chanel College	Coolock, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
60871V	Mercy College Coolock	St Brendans Drive, Coolock, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
60430O	St Pauls C.B.S.	Christian Brothers, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
60843Q	St Josephs Secondary School	Stanhope St, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
70150O	Coláiste Éanna	Kilkieran Road, Cabra, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
60410I	C.B.S. James Street	James's Street, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
60470D	Christian Brothers	Synge St, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
60792C	Presentation College	Warrenmount, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
60872A	Mercy Secondary School	Goldenbridge, Inchicore, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
60400F	St Vincents C.B.S.	Glasnevin, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
70310K	Plunkett College	Swords Road, Whitehall, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
70321P	Margaret Aylward Community College	The Thatch Road, Whitehall, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
81017A	Trinity Comprehensive School	Ballymun Road, Ballymun, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
91344V	Rosmini Community School	Grace Park Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
60510M	St Johns College De La Salle	Le Fanu Rd, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
60720A	Saint Dominic's Secondary School	Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
60732H	Caritas College	Drumfinn Road, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
70240P	Kylemore College	Kylemore Road, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
60511O	Beneavin De La Salle College	Beneavin Road, Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
60571J	Patrician College	Deanstown Ave, Finglas West, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
60581M	St Kevins CBS	Ballygall Road East, Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
60741I	St Michaels Secondary School	Wellmount Road, Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
60852R	Mater Christi	Cappagh, Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
70180A	Coláiste Eoin	Cappagh Road, Fingals, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
60800V	Loreto College	Crumlin Road, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
60841M	Rosary College	Armagh Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Roll No.	Name	Address	County
60990G	Meanscoil Chroimghlinne	314/318 Crumlin Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
60991I	Our Lady Of Mercy Secondary School	Mourne Road, Drimnagh, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
70130I	Greenhills College	Limekiln Avenue, Greenhills, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
70160R	St. Kevins College	Clogher Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
70020B	Grange Community College	Grange Road, Donaghmede, Dublin 13	Dublin 13
91318U	The Donahies Community School	Streamville Road, Dublin 13	Dublin 13
70081V	Riversdale Community College	Blanchardstown Rd North, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
91316Q	Blakestown Community School	Blanchardstown, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
91305L	Ballinteer Community School	Ballinteer, Dublin 16	Dublin 16
91343T	St. Tiernan's Community School	Parkvale, Balally, Dublin 16	Dublin 16
70330Q	Coláiste Dhúlaigh	Barrycourt Road, Coolock, Dublin 17	Dublin 17
60262T	St Laurence College	Loughlinstown, Dublin 18	Dublin 18
91302F	Phobailscoil Iosolde	Palmerstown, Dublin 20	Dublin 20
70040H	Deansrath Community College	New Nangor Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
70041J	Collinstown Park Community College	Neilstown Rd., Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
70042L	St. Kevin's Community College	Fonthill Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
70141N	Jobstown Community College	Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
91335U	Tallaght Community School	Balrothery, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
91337B	Killinarden Community School	Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
91338D	St Aidan's Community School	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
60343T	St Joseph's Secondary School	Convent Lane, Rush, Co Dublin	Dublin County
70010V	Balbriggan Community College	Pine Ridge, Balbriggan, Co Dublin	Dublin County
70120F	St Finians Community College	Swords, Co Dublin	Dublin County
91310E	Cabinteely Community School	Cabinteely, Co Dublin	Dublin County
91330K	Holy Child Community School	Pearse St, Sallynoggin, Co Dublin	Dublin County
62981P	Colaiste Einde	Threadneedle Rd, Galway	Galway
63000E	Presentation Secondary School	Presentation Rd, Galway	Galway
63060W	Scoil Áine	Mainistir Na Coille Moire, Kylemore, Co Galway	Galway
63140U	St Patrick's College	Dublin Road, Tuam, Co Galway	Galway
71250A	Colaiste Cholmcille	Indreabhán, Co na Gaillimhe	Galway
71380N	Gairmscoil na bPíarsach	Ros Muc, Co na Gaillimhe	Galway
71390Q	Tuam Vocational School	Tuam, Co Galway	Galway
71400Q	Galway Community College	Wellpark, Galway	Galway
81012N	Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin	An Cheathrú Rua, Co na Gaillimhe	Galway
91411K	Scoil Phobail Mhic Dara	Carna, Co na Gaillimhe	Galway
91412M	Scoil Phobail	Clifden, Co Galway	Galway
70450D	Killarney Community College	New Road, Killarney, Co Kerry	Kerry
70460G	Community College	Killorglin, Co Kerry	Kerry
70500P	Listowel Community College	Listowel, Co Kerry	Kerry
70540E	Causeway Comprehensive School	Causeway, Co Kerry	Kerry
70550H	Tralee Community College	Clash, Tralee, Co Kerry	Kerry
61700W	St Joseph's Academy	Kildare Town, Co Kildare	Kildare
61702D	St Pauls Secondary School	Monasterevin, Co Kildare	Kildare
70650L	Athy Community College	Athy, Co Kildare	Kildare
70660O	Curragh Post-Primary School	McSwiney Road, Curragh, Co Kildare	Kildare
70680U	St Conleth's Vocational School	Station Road, Newbridge, Co Kildare	Kildare
70690A	Vocational School / Kildare College of Further Studies	Kildare Town	Kildare
70710D	St Patrick's Community College	Limerick Road, Naas, Co Kildare	Kildare
70720G	St Farnan's Post Primary School	Prosperous, Naas, Co Kildare	Kildare

Roll No.	Name	Address	County
70730J	Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin	Rathangan, Co Kildare	Kildare
70590T	Duiske College	Graignamanagh, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
70600T	Coláiste Mhuire	Johnstown, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
70610W	City Vocational School	New Street, Kilkenny	Kilkenny
70620C	Coláiste Cois Siúire	Mooncoin, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
70640I	Grennan College	Ladywell St, Thomastown, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
71490U	St. Aengus Post-Primary	Limerick Road, Mountrath, Co Laois	Laois
71510A	Portlaoise Vocational School	Railway Street, Portlaoise, Co Laois	Laois
64200R	Colaiste Mhichil	Sexton Street, Limerick	Limerick
64250J	Presentation Secondary School	Sexton Street, Limerick	Limerick
64280S	Salesian Secondary School	Fernbank, Limerick	Limerick
64290V	Ardscoil Mhuire	Corbally, Limerick	Limerick
71790J	Desmond College	Gortboy, Newcastle West, Co Limerick	Limerick
71810M	Coláiste Pobail Mhichíl	Cappamore, Limerick	Limerick
71840V	Colaiste Chiarain	Croom, Co Limerick	Limerick
71870H	Abbeyfeale Vocational School	Abbeyfeale, Co Limerick	Limerick
71920T	St Nessan's Community College	Moylish Park, Limerick	Limerick
76070A	Coláiste Ióasef	Kilmallock, Co Limerick	Limerick
91446G	St Endas Community School	Kilmallock Rd, Limerick	Limerick
71690F	Ballymahon Vocational School	Ballymahon, >Co Longford	Longford
71710I	Ardscoil Phadraig	Granard, Co Longford	Longford
71720L	Lanesboro Community College	Lanesboro, Co Longford	Longford
71730O	Templemichael College	Templemichael, Longford	Longford
71750U	Bush Post Primary School	Riverstown, Co Louth	Louth
71761C	St Oliver's Community College	Rathmullen, Co Louth	Louth
71770D	Ó Fiaich College	Dublin Road, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
71780G	Scoil Ui Mhuiri	Barn Road, Dunleer, Co Louth	Louth
91441T	Ardee Community School	Ardee, Co Louth	Louth
64690O	Scoil Muire Agus Pdraig	Swinford, Co Mayo	Mayo
72020L	Moyne College	Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
72050U	St. Brendan's College	Belmullet, Co Mayo	Mayo
72070D	McHale College	Achill, Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
72100J	St. Tiernan's College	Crossmolina, Co Mayo	Mayo
72140V	Colaiste Chomain	Rosspport, Co Mayo	Mayo
72160E	Vocational School	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
76060U	Davitt College	Springfield, Castlebar, Co Mayo	Mayo
71970L	St. Fintinas Post Primary School	Longwood, Enfield, Co Meath	Meath
71980O	O'Carolan College	Nobber, Co Meath	Meath
72010I	Beaufort College	Trim Rd, Navan, Co Meath	Meath
91508C	Boyne Community College	Trim, Co Meath	Meath
72171J	Largy College	Clones, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
72180K	Inver College	Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
72190N	Castleblayney College	Dublin Road, Castleblayney, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
72210Q	Beech Hill College	Monaghan, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
72530L	Ard Scoil Chiarain Naofa	Frederick St, Clara, Co Offaly	Offaly
72540O	Oaklands Community College	Sr. Senan Avenue, Edenderry, Co Offaly	Offaly
72560U	Tullamore College	Riverside, Tullamore, Co Offaly	Offaly
72290R	Roscommon Vocational School	Lisnamult, Roscommon Town	Roscommon
72300R	Corran College	Ballymote, Co Sligo	Sligo
72320A	Coláiste Iascaigh	Easkey, Co Sligo	Sligo
72340G	Gurteen Vocational School	Gurteen, Co Sligo	Sligo
72360M	Ballinode College	Ballinode, Co Sligo	Sligo
65350S	Patrician Presentation	Rocklow Rd, Fethard, Co Tipperary	Tipperary

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Roll No.	Name	Address	County
72400V	Vocational School	Carrick-On-Suir, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
72420E	Clonmel Vocational School	Clonmel, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
72430H	Scoil Ruain	Killenaule, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
72450N	St Joseph's College	Newport, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
72480W	St. Alibe's School	Rosanna Road, Tipperary Town, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
72490C	Vocational School	Castlemeadows, Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
64930I	C.B.S. Mount Sion	Barrack Street, Waterford	Waterford
64970U	Presentation Secondary School	Waterford	Waterford
72220T	Coláiste Chathail Naofa	Youghal Rd, Dungarvan, Waterford	Waterford
72241E	St Paul's Community College	Browne's Road, Waterford	Waterford
76066J	Meánscoil San Nioclás	Rinn O gCuanach, Co Port Lairge	Waterford
63191O	St Aloysius College	The Park, Athlone, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
71420W	Castlepollard Community College	Castlepollard, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
71430C	Columba College	Killucan, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
71450I	Mullingar Community College	Millmount Road, Mullingar, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
71600B	Coláiste Abbain	Adamstown, Co Wexford	Wexford
71610E	Bridgetown Vocational College	Bridgetown, Co Wexford	Wexford
71620H	Vocational College Bunclody	Bunclody, Co Wexford	Wexford
71630K	Vocational School	Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Wexford
71650Q	Kilmuckridge Vocational College	Kilmuckridge, Co Wexford	Wexford
71660T	New Ross Vocational College	New Ross, Co Wexford	Wexford
71680C	Wexford Vocational College	Westgate, Co Wexford	Wexford
91431Q	Ramsgrange Community School	Ramsgrange, Co Wexford	Wexford
70740M	Arklow Community College	Coolgreaney Rd, Arklow, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
70770V	St Thomas' Community College	Novara Avenue, Bray, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
70800E	St Kevin's Community College	Dunlavin, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
70810H	Avondale Community College	Rathdrum, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
70820K	Abbey Community College	Wicklow Town, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
91376L	St. Killian's Community School	Ballywaltrim, Co Wicklow	Wicklow

School Enrolments.

91. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Science the expected number of students, including the percentage increase, to enrol into secondary schools in September 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012; the locations which can expect an increase in pupil enrolment based upon her contact with secondary schools; the provisions being made by the schools to facilitate the increase in students enrolling into secondary schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28484/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The information in the format requested by the Deputy is not readily available. The annual total of births in Ireland has been increasing since 1995. As a direct consequence of this, enrolments at Primary level have been increasing since 2001/02 and are projected to continue increasing for the foreseeable future. Inward migration is another factor pushing up enrolment at both primary and second level in recent years together with an underlying increase

in participation — especially beyond the compulsory school-leaving age.

Taking all factors into account including some further growth in retention, continuing net inward migration and the long-term impact of rising numbers at primary level feeding through to second level, it is expected that total enrolment at second level will resume growth from its current low level of just around 330,000 (projection for 2006/07) to reach about 370,000 in 2015/16. It will increase further after 2015 as those born in the years of rising births from 1995-2004 will pass through second level in the period coming years.

Of course, the projected growth in enrolment at primary and second level will not be evenly spread across the country. Sharp differences in population growth, and even decline in some areas, are characteristic of many areas of the country. While the level of teaching resources can be adjusted to changes in enrolment through the staffing schedules in operation at primary and second level hard infrastructure such as buildings and other facilities are more difficult to plan for at a very local level. And where investment takes place it takes time to put these resources in place

to meet additional and sometimes unexpected demand.

To deal with this increasing demand for school places, the Government is providing funding of €4.5 billion over the lifetime of the new National Development Plan (NDP). This will be the largest investment programme in schools in the history of the State and it will enable my Department to ensure that school places are available where needed as well as continuing to upgrade existing school facilities. This investment will allow my Department to continue the school building programme which commenced during the life time of the last NDP when well over €2.6 billion was invested in school development, delivering over 7,800 projects.

The budget for 2007 is the first year of the roll out of the new NDP. This funding will enable my Department to continue to provide modern school accommodation on an on-going basis, particularly in developing areas. This year alone around over €540 million will be spent on school building infrastructure with over 1,500 projects on my Department's school building programme. Construction in 2007 alone will deliver over 700 classrooms to provide permanent accommodation for over 17,500 pupils, mainly in developing areas.

Third Level Courses.

92. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Education and Science the reason is it necessary for medical colleges to charge overseas students to raise revenue at the expense of Irish students who are more qualified according to the CAO points system, which results in fewer Irish students studying medicine at a time when more Irish doctors are needed in the health service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28488/07]

352. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Education and Science the changes that will be made to the CAO system to increase places for Irish/EU medical students if the High Court challenge to the quota is successful; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28282/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 92 and 352 together.

The process of increasing the number of Irish/EU places in medicine in Ireland commenced in 2006 following the acceptance by the Government of the report entitled "Medical Education in Ireland A new Direction" published jointly by the Department of Health and Children and my Department. The report (the Fottrell Report) called for an increase in medicine places to 725 (from 305) over a four year period. This is being achieved through the provision of an

additional 180 undergraduate places, and the introduction of a new programme of graduate entry to medicine which will provide 240 places. In the 2006/07 academic year, an additional 70 undergraduate places were provided amongst the five medical schools and a 40 additional places were provided in the 2007/08 academic year. A further 35 places will be provided in 2008/09 and 2009/10.

In addition to increasing the number of undergraduate places, a programme of graduate entry to medicine has commenced in the current academic year with 60 new places created. A further 60 graduate places will be provided in the 2008/09 academic year and the graduate stream will grow to 240 places by 2010/2011. Generally, it is open to higher education institutions to enrol non-EU students and this is in keeping with the report on the Internationalisation of Irish Education Services accepted by the Government and published in 2004, and the OECD Review of Higher Education published in 2004. It is a matter for institutions to determine the fees charged. I am aware that there will be a reduction in non-Irish/EU medicine places in our medical schools as part of the process of increasing Irish/EU places.

I do not propose to comment on a case that is before the courts.

Psychological Service.

93. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to her reply to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 53, 54 and 80 of 2 October 2007, if the 17 % increase in funding for the service provided in the 2007 Estimates allowed some further expansion in the number of psychologists in 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28466/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I can inform the Deputy that since NEPS was established, we have trebled the number of psychologists in the service. Notwithstanding this and as I have previously announced my Department is committed to increasing psychological service staffing further, so that by 2009 there will be 200 NEPS psychologists. To this end I can further inform the Deputy that my Department has been working, in conjunction with the Public Appointments Commission to recruit new psychologists from an existing panel to the service.

The number of psychologists as of April 2007 stood at 128 including 4 assigned to the National Behavioural Support Service and to the Further Education Service. Since then nine individuals have been appointed in this regard. This advance in numbers has been reduced somewhat by the effects of resignations and retirement and the compliment in service currently stands at 134.

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Three further psychologists are due to join NEPS under this process between now and early January 2008.

The panel concerned is now exhausted and the Public Appointments Service has recently announced the commencement of a competition from which a new panel will be drawn to continue the recruitment process. The deadline for receipt of applications in this regard has now passed and work is proceeding on the short-listing of candidates for interview. It is envisaged that the process will be completed and panels formed by the end of next month allowing recruitment to recommence early in 2008. My Department remains committed to the development of a strong and robust educational psychological service serving the needs of all primary and post-primary pupils.

Schools Building Projects.

94. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Education and Science her plans to address the growing demand for second level school places in Swords, County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26023/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Department has carried out an extensive study on educational requirements for Swords for the medium to long term. This study has been formalised and included in the “Draft Area Development Plan for North Dublin, East Meath and South Louth” which was published in January 2007. The Commission on School Accommodation has completed a public consultation process on foot of this draft Plan and is currently finalising its report which will also be published. The recommendations in the final Report will be used to inform capital investment decisions in the areas covered including Swords for the foreseeable future.

There is no doubt that additional post primary places will be needed in the coming years in the area concerned and the Department is already taking action under the Fingal School Model process to ensure that these will be delivered commensurate with the need. In the meantime, the Department is satisfied that, between them, the four existing post primary schools have adequate provision to cater for current demand.

Higher Education Grants.

95. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Education and Science the reason a person (details supplied) is being penalised in relation to a grant application; if it is Government policy to penalise families who try to save money; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28395/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): In relation to SSIA income, I want to assure the Deputy that the Government is determined to ensure that SSIA savers are treated fairly in the calculation of reckonable income under my Department’s maintenance grant schemes. This is being achieved in two ways: firstly, income from SSIA’s is being treated exactly the same as income from similar savings and investment products; and secondly, the reckonable income limits for student grants have been increased considerably in recent years.

Since SSIA’s were introduced, the amount of income to be included in respect of them is the government grant earned on the savings in the relevant tax year plus, in the case of savings accounts, the gross interest earned in the relevant tax year, and, in the case of investment accounts, the investment profit earned in the relevant tax year. Investment losses sustained in the relevant tax year are deductible. The same position has long applied to interest earned on other savings products, including deposit accounts, post office savings certificates, life assurance bonds etc. The treatment of SSIA’s is therefore consistent with the traditional treatment of other similar investments over many years. The Department of Finance is aware of this approach to the assessment of income for eligibility for student support.

So, in applying for a grant for the 2007/08 academic year, only the relevant income earned, as outlined above, on the SSIA in 2006 has to be declared. The maximum that the Government grant to any SSIA saver could have amounted to last year, as in any year of the SSIA scheme, is €762. This has been the position since SSIA’s were introduced.

In relation to the income limits which apply when a person’s eligibility for a grant is being assessed, the Deputy will be pleased to know that these have increased significantly since SSIA’s were introduced. The 2003/04 academic year was the first year in which the full year SSIA income had to be included in applying for a grant, as the reference tax year for the purpose of grant assessment was 2002. For the 2003/04 academic year, the income limit for a family with 4 children was increased from €23,770 to €35,165— an increase of nearly 48%. The income limits have continued to rise each year, to the point where the limit for a family with 4 children this year is €42,490 — an increase of nearly 79% on the amount allowed in the 2002/03 academic year.

As these increases show, this Government has shown a clear determination to improve the grant system to ensure that students get as much support as possible. But, not only have we increased the income limits significantly, we have also made other improvements to the grants system:

- We have introduced two new income thresholds to allow for 25% and 75% grants as well as the 50% and 100% rates;
- We have brought in a new Special Rate of Maintenance Grant to target extra funding at those who need it most; and
- We have increased grant payment rates.

Indeed, the maximum level of the ordinary maintenance grant available this year is €3,420 – compared to €2,390 in 2002. The maximum level of the Special Rate of Maintenance in 2007/08 is €6,690 — compared to €3,000 in 2001/02. This year, over €241 million has been allocated for the third level student support schemes.

The student referred to by the Deputy is in receipt of assistance under the maintenance grant schemes for 2007/08.

Access to Third Level Education.

96. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Minister for Education and Science if her attention has been drawn to a recent report (details supplied) which suggested the replacement of the CAO points system with a lottery system coupled with an aptitude test; her views on whether the CAO points system is unfair and that the Government should consider adopting the model used in the Netherlands which has a weighted lottery system for medical, dentistry and veterinary science students; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28487/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I am aware of recent public comment in relation to the operation of the CAO system. In my view, the CAO system has been a long standing success of the Irish education system. In addition to its core task to serve as a clearing house for the institutions in the allocation of higher education places to applicants, the CAO has, since its creation, earned a well deserved reputation for integrity and fairness in the conduct of its business, which has served students, institutions and Ireland well.

There have been considerable efforts over time to review the operation of the CAO, and the points system which underpin the operation of the CAO, most notably in the Points Commission report of 1999, which considered and rejected the concept of a lottery approach. However, I am concerned that the points system can, in some cases, lead to undue pressure on students to attain perfect or near perfect performance in the Leaving Certificate in order to gain access to particular third level courses, particularly medicine. I do not believe that is good for students or for the second level system. Accordingly, as part of the Fottrell reforms for medical education which were accepted by the Government, new

procedures to reform access to medicine are currently being finalised.

It is planned to introduce the new procedure in 2009. The Programme for Government contains a commitment to evaluate the success of the new alternative entry arrangements for medical education with a view to determining if similar changes should be made in the application procedures for other high-points courses.

State Examinations.

97. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the charge proposed to be levied on students wishing to sit the 2008 junior certificate examinations; the charges that were levied in each year from 2002 to date in 2007; the way these charges are calculated; the discussions undertaken with other Government Departments and agencies, including the Department of Social and Family Affairs, before setting these charges; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28479/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Entry fees for the 2008 Junior Certificate Examination have not yet been determined. I expect that a decision will be taken very shortly with a view to announcing the new fee levels before the end of the current school term. The standard Junior Certificate examination fee that applied for the years 2002 to 2007 are set out in the following table:

Year	Fees
	€
2002:	69
2003:	72
2004:	82
2005:	86
2006:	88
2007:	91

Examination fees are generally increased each year in line with increases in the consumer price index. It has not been the practice to hold discussions with the Department of Social and Family Affairs or any other Government agency before setting examination fee levels. There is an alleviation scheme in place whereby current medical card holders and their dependents are exempt from the payment of examination fees. This exemption applies to approximately 30% of all examination candidates each year.

I should point out that the income received from examination fees generally covers only a fraction of the cost of running the examinations. The costs associated with the certificate examinations have been increasing significantly in recent years due to the introduction of new methods of assessment in various subjects and to continuing

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

increases in special arrangements for students with special needs.

Teachers' Remuneration.

98. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Science, in respect of the average annual cost of a primary school teacher as being €60,000 per annum, as per her reply to Parliamentary Question No. 418 of 5 April 2007, the capital cost in today's money values of 40 years service and an average pension of 25 years after retirement including the retirement lump sum; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28470/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Based on a constant average annual salary of €60,000 over a forty year teaching career, the cumulative gross salary of a teacher would amount to €2.400 million in today's money. The gross superannuation costs calculated on this same salary on a constant basis over a subsequent 25 year retirement period would amount to €0.840 million inclusive of €90,000 in respect of retirement gratuity. The superannuation costs are those applicable in the case of a person who pays modified class D rate PRSI through out his/her employment and whose occupational pension on retirement is not integrated with social welfare benefits. The corresponding costs in the case of a person who pays full rate, Class A, PRSI and whose benefits are integrated with social welfare benefits would be €2.965 million, comprising €2.400 million salary and €0.565 million superannuation inclusive of €90,000 in respect of retirement gratuity.

I would again point out that the salary and superannuation costs of a teacher depend on a number of factors, including the particular allowances held during the teachers career and in particular in the years preceding retirement. Life expectancy in retirement would also impact on the superannuation costs.

Second Level Charges.

99. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Science if her attention has been drawn to fact that applicants for secondary school places are usually required to accompany their application with a non-refundable fee; her views on whether unsuccessful applicants should have this fee refunded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27053/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): It is a fundamental principle of the Free Second Level Education Scheme that no charge be made in respect of:—

(a) instruction in any subject of my Department's Programme for Secondary Schools;

(b) recreation or study facilities where all pupils are expected to avail themselves of them as part of the school programme.

(c) any other activity in which all pupils are required to take part.

Accordingly, it would be a breach of my Department's policy for post-primary schools involved in the Free Second Level Education Scheme to demand or levy a fee. However, voluntary contributions by parents, or charges for optional extras over and above what is provided for in the general school programme, are permissible provided that it is made absolutely clear to parents that there is no question of compulsion to pay and that, in making a contribution, they are doing so of their own volition.

Schools are allowed to charge a booking fee when considering applicants for enrolment, provided this is refundable following a decision on enrolment. Booking fees are sometimes required by schools in order to avoid "double booking" of pupils in schools that could result in the loss of teachers.

School Staffing.

100. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Education and Science her policy in relation to limiting the expansion of existing second level schools in terms of total student numbers with respect to her decision not to pay teachers' salaries in new second level schools; if she will pay the salaries of additional teachers to cater for the expanded student numbers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25517/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I assume that the Deputy is referring to my reply to the house of 2 October 2007 in which I stated that, while continuing to give reasonable support to existing fee charging second level schools, I do not intend to provide state funding for any new fee charging second level schools. I can clarify for the Deputy that my statement related to any proposal that might come before my Department regarding the expansion of the number of fee charging schools and did not concern second level schools generally.

School Accommodation.

101. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of primary and second level school children accommodated in prefabricated classrooms; when she expects to be in a position to meet the permanent classroom requirement of such children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28447/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The information sought by the Deputy is not readily available in my Department. However, if the Deputy wishes to request details on a specific school, my officials will provide the required information. The demand for additional accommodation in schools has risen significantly over the last number of years mainly due to the rapid expansion in teacher numbers particularly in the area of special needs, the growth in the school-going population in rapidly developing areas and the demands to cater for diversity through the recognition of new Gael-scoileanna and Educate Together schools.

The focus within my Department is to empower schools to resolve their accommodation needs, wherever possible, by way of permanent accommodation. In order to reduce the amount of temporary/prefabricated accommodation at primary level and to upgrade existing facilities, two new initiatives, the Permanent Accommodation Initiative and the Small School Initiative were launched in 2003 on a pilot basis. The purpose of these initiatives was to allow primary schools to undertake a permanent solution to their classroom accommodation needs and to achieve the best value for money as opposed to the provision of temporary accommodation.

The feedback has in general been very positive, the number of schools participating has increased year on year and many schools are anxious to be included. In order to maintain this momentum I approved over 250 additional schools to participate in these schemes in 2007. As a result of these schemes the amount spent on the purchase of prefabricated buildings in has been significantly reduced.

Labour Force Statistics.

102. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Taoiseach the average and mean unemployment here at present and for every year since 1997. [28628/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Tom Kitt): Statistics on the labour force are compiled from the Quarterly National Household Survey. The latest statistics available are for the period March to May 2007. Unemployment details as requested by the Deputy are set out in the table.

Persons aged 15 years and over unemployed (ILO), 1997-2007

Period	Unemployed	Unemployment
	'000	%
1997	159.0	10.3
1998	126.4	7.8
1999	96.9	5.7
2000	74.5	4.3
2001	65.1	3.6

Period	Unemployed	Unemployment
	'000	%
2002	77.0	4.2
2003	82.1	4.4
2004	84.2	4.4
2005	85.6	4.2
2006	91.4	4.3
2007	98.8	4.5

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey, Central Statistics Office.

Note: annual data presented refers to the results for the second quarter of each year.

103. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Taoiseach the number of people in employment in the State in each of the past ten years. [28658/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Tom Kitt): Statistics on the labour force are compiled from the Quarterly National Household Survey. The latest statistics available are for the period March to May 2007. Details of numbers in employment as requested by the Deputy are set out in the table.

Persons aged 15 years and over in employment (ILO) 1999 - 2007

Period	'000
1997	1,379.9
1998	1,494.0
1999	1,589.1
2000	1,671.4
2001	1,721.9
2002	1,763.9
2003	1,793.4
2004	1,836.2
2005	1,929.2
2006	2,017.0
2007	2,095.4

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey, Central Statistics Office.

Note: annual data presented refers to the results for the second quarter of each year.

Ministerial Staff.

104. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by his Department on 1 November 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28158/07]

The Taoiseach: The names, titles and annual salaries of each of the Political Advisers, Press Officers, Personal Assistants or other Political Appointees who were employed by my Depart-

[The Taoiseach.]

ment on 1 November, 2002 are set out in the table.

Name	Title	Annual Salary 1 November, 2002
		€
Gerry Hickey	Programme Manager & Special Adviser	179,901
Gerry Howlin	Special Adviser	92,949
Una Claffey	Special Adviser	102,688
Barbara Jones	Special Adviser	77,330
Katherine Bulbulia	Programme Manager to Tanaiste	125,930
Brian Murphy	Special Adviser	66,465
Joe Lennon	Special Adviser	106,441
Mandy Johnston	Government Press Secretary	92,949
Iarla Mongey	Deputy Government Press Secretary/Head of GIS	74,697
Sean Nolan	Personal Assistant	38,950
Yvonne Graham	Personal Assistant	35,888
Olive Melvin	Personal Assistant	43,399
Sarah McLoughlin	Personal Assistant	33,886
Evelyn Eager	Personal Assistant	43,399
Denise Kavanagh	Personal Assistant	43,399
Carl Gibney	Personal Assistant to Minister of State & Chief Whip	61,670
Nuala Redmond	Personal Secretary to Minister of State & Chief Whip	30,741
Ciara Furlong	Personal Secretary to Minister of State for Europe	29,869
Averil Power	Personal Assistant to Minister of State & Chief Whip	33,886
Frank Worley	Usher	26,720

The following staff were Press Officers in the Government Press Office (they were Civil Servants and not appointed by me).

Name	Grade	Annual Salary 1 November, 2002
		€
Gillian Tracey	Press Officer — Higher Executive Officer	37,931
Geraldine Butler	Press Officer — Higher Executive Officer	38,896
Patrick Fannin	Press Officer — Higher Executive Officer	38,896
Michael Moran	Press Officer — Higher Executive Officer	42,512

105. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28173/07]

The Taoiseach: The names, titles and annual salaries of each of the Political Advisers, Press Officers, Personal Assistants or other staff appointed by me are listed in the table.

Name	Title	Annual Salary
		€
Gerry Hickey	Programme Manager & Special Adviser	229,918
Mandy Johnson	Special Adviser	136,034
Brian Murphy	Special Adviser	118,791
Padraig Slyne	Special Adviser	88,261
Jill Collins	Special Adviser to the Minister of State & Government Chief Whip	67,704
Eoghan O'Neachtain	Government Press Secretary	136,034

Name	Title	Annual Salary
		€
Mark Costigan	Deputy Government Press Secretary	106,430
John Downing	Deputy Government Press Secretary	113,036
Seán Nolan	Personal Assistant	52,379
Yvonne Graham	Personal Assistant	52,379
Olive Melvin	Personal Assistant	58,139
Denise Kavanagh	Personal Assistant	58,139
Sarah McLoughlin	Personal Assistant	52,379
Aoife Ní Lochlainn	Personal Assistant	44,314
Harry Murphy	Personal Assistant to the Minister of State & Government Chief Whip	47,000
Tracey Young	Personal Secretary to the Minister of State & Government Chief Whip	45,121
Perpetua Brady	Personal Secretary	40,733
Damien Cassidy	Civilian Driver to Leader of the Seanad	33,148
Frank Worley	Usher	38,169

It should be noted that Press Officers in the Government Press Office are Civil Servants and are not appointed by me.

Insurance Industry.

106. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the person who has responsibility for monitoring the use by insurance companies of data in relation to the flood plains of rivers and previous flooding patterns in setting or raising premiums, or in refusing quotations to new customers; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that insurance companies are citing location in a flood plain as the reason for high premiums or refusing a new quotation in areas where there is no history of flooding (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28059/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): As the Deputy will be aware the decision whether to provide any specific form of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered is a commercial matter based on the assessment an insurer will make of the risks involved. Data on flood risk is provided to insurers by private companies and the use of such information is a matter for the company concerned in determining whether any particular risk should be underwritten. The representative body for the Insurance industry in Ireland has however indicated to my Department that insurers would seek to continue to provide insurance cover to customers in circumstances where the risk of flooding has increased, but the change in risk would need to be reflected in the terms on which the insurance was offered. It also indicated that it was not aware of specific instances where insurance cover was refused where no history of flooding existed.

The Financial Regulator has no role in relation to issues of pricing or the scope of cover provided by insurance companies. However, an individual,

in dealing with an insurance provider can refer any unresolved complaint to the Financial Services Ombudsman for investigation and adjudication. My Department has also been advised by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government that as regards planning and flood risk, the Planning and Development Act 2000 states that planning authorities may include in their development plans objectives regulating, restricting or controlling development in areas at risk from flooding. Where development is proposed in an area at risk from flooding, it is a matter for each planning authority to evaluate such risk on the basis of a flood risk assessment, where appropriate. In addition, planning permission may either be refused, or, if granted, can be made subject to conditions requiring the implementation of measures necessary to alleviate or avoid damage due to flooding.

Flood Relief.

107. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the person who has responsibility for designating the area covered by the flood plain of a river; the data used in such designations; if his attention has been drawn to changes in the area covered by the flood plain of the River Liffey to include a road (details supplied) in County Dublin despite the fact that this road has never been flooded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28076/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Noel Ahern): It is assumed that the Deputy's Question refers to data displayed on the Office of Public Work's website floodmaps.ie. At present there is not extensive national flood plain mapping. In 2004 the Government designated the OPW as lead agency for flood risk management. The OPW is currently implementing a comprehensive strategy that includes a programme to develop predictive maps that will indicate areas

[Deputy Noel Ahern.]

expected to be at risk from flooding for flood events of varying severities. A European Union Directive that will enter into force this month will require that Member States produce this type of mapping for all River basins where there is significant flood risk. A number of sophisticated techniques, including hydraulic modelling will be used. While it will take a number of years to complete the predictive mapping programme, maps for the first catchments completed will be available on the website in 2008.

In preparation for the predictive mapping programme, the OPW collected from various state organisations and other sources reports, newspaper articles and other records in relation to areas that flooded in the past. The material was checked to establish as far as possible the accuracy of the information and the approximate location of the flood event recorded. The material was presented on the floodmaps.ie website in 2006 as a guide to members of the public and planners pending the development of predictive maps.

Due to lack of information in some of the source material, it is pointed out on the website that the location indicated for flood events is approximate only. Users of the website are invited to forward additional flood related material they may have or to query items already displayed on it. If the Deputy will provide my Office with further details of the information relating to Lucan that is believed to be incorrect I will have the matter examined.

Tax Code.

108. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance if he will consider removing capital gains tax for farmers who are forced to sell their land to local authorities for road building or road widening purposes, provided that the proceeds of the compensation is reinvested in the farm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28532/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): I assume that the Deputy has in mind the re-introduction of roll-over relief. It was announced in the 2003 Budget that no roll-over relief would be allowed for any purpose on gains arising from disposals on or after 4 December 2002. This relief was introduced when CGT rates were much higher than current levels. The abolition of this relief was in accordance with the overall taxation policy of widening the tax base in order to keep direct tax rates low.

As the Deputy will be aware, there is already in place a generous package of reliefs that continue to be available to the farming sector. As you will also be aware, it is a long standing tradition that the Minister for Finance does not com-

ment on taxation matters in advance of the annual Budget.

109. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the reason farmers have been denied significant increases in personal tax credits available to employees and others whose income is paid through the PAYE system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28534/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): The position is that the PAYE allowance, as it was then, was introduced in 1980 to improve the tax progression of PAYE taxpayers and to take account of the fact that the self-employed generally then had the advantage of paying tax on a preceding year basis. The argument was also made at the time that the general scheme of allowances discriminated against employees and in favour of other taxpayers.

There have been changes since 1980 — the self-employed now pay tax on a current year basis, for example. However, the PAYE allowance has become a tax credit. Moreover, given that there can be significant timing advantages in the payment of tax for the self employed, the employee credit is still perceived as necessary to ensure a balance in the system. The cost to the Exchequer of extending the PAYE credit to farmers and the self employed, including proprietary directors, is estimated at €610 million in a full year. The cost of abolishing the PAYE credit and increasing the personal credit by the same amount is estimated at €750 million in a full year. The additional cost would arise because the personal credit is transferable between spouses.

It should be borne in mind that there is already in place a generous package of reliefs and specific arrangements that continue to be available exclusively to the farming sector. These include income averaging; stock relief; accelerated capital allowances for expenditure incurred on farm buildings; accelerated capital allowances in respect of expenditure incurred on certain pollution control measures; capital allowances in respect of expenditure incurred on the purchase of milk quota; an exemption from income tax in respect of certain income from certain leased farmland and special tax treatment in respect of profits accruing as a result of the disposal of stock under statutory disease eradication measures. In addition, certain young trained farmers can also qualify for full relief from Stamp Duty on the transfer of land and can also avail of enhanced stock relief of 100 per cent.

110. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance if there are plans to introduce a tax initiative scheme to finance future water and sewage schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28553/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that provision already exists for a limited scheme of tax relief in respect of expenditure incurred on the treatment of trade effluent and the supply of water. The scheme operates in conjunction with local authorities. It caters for a situation where, for the purposes of his or her trade, a person contributes a capital sum towards expenditure incurred by a local authority on an asset to be used for trade effluent control purposes or for the provision of water supply. Capital allowances may be claimed in respect of any such capital sums contributed, with amounts contributed being written off over eight years at the rate of 12.5% per annum.

I am also informed that, in the farming area, capital allowances are available for capital expenditure incurred on the construction of certain buildings or structures for the control of farm pollution. These include waste storage facilities including slurry tanks, soiled water tanks and effluent tanks. The scheme applies only to farmers who have put in place a farm nutrient management plan drawn up by an agency or planner approved by the Department of Agriculture and Food. For expenditure incurred on or after 1 January 2005 allowances can be claimed over 3 years with the expenditure being written off at the rate of 33 1/3% per annum. There are no plans for the introduction of further tax incentive schemes in this area.

Tax Collection.

111. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare is in receipt of all their tax concessions in view of their age bracket; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28035/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the taxpayer is due the age tax credit since 2004. The taxpayer's income tax liability has been reviewed for the years 2004 to 2006 inclusive to include the age tax credit and PAYE balancing statements for each year issued on 7 November 2007, together with a cheque in settlement. The age tax credit for the year 2007 has already been included in the taxpayer's certificate of tax credits and standard rate cut-off point which issued to the taxpayer on 9 August 2007.

Public-Private Partnerships.

112. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the number of PPPs in operation; the commercial value of these plans; the number of PPPs due to be delivered under the national development plan; the monetary value of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28060/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): The Central PPP Unit in my Department hosts a project tracker, available at www.ppp.gov.ie, showing PPP projects of an estimated value of €20m or over which have reached the stage of the appointment of client advisers or later stages. Because of the commercial sensitivity of the information, the indicative project values are presented in broad ranges as supplied by the Departments/Agencies involved. The current tracker lists 69 PPP projects at various stages of procurement, including 12 projects in operation in the roads, education and environment sectors — four in the range €20m-€50m ; four in €50m-€100m; one in €100m-€250m and three greater than €250m.

The NDP target for PPP investment (including PPPs funded by user charges) represents 7.2% (i.e. €13.3 billion of total investment of €183.7 billion) over the seven years of the Plan. The Plan identifies the following projects to be brought forward for PPP procurement:

- Arts: Abbey Theatre, National Concert Hall, National Conference Centre
- Education: Bundles of primary schools, 3rd level institutes
- Environment: Housing and Waste Management
- OPW: Decentralisation accommodation projects
- Justice Group: Criminal Courts Complex, Thornton Hall
- Health: National Network for Radiation for Oncology Services
- Enterprise, Trade and Employment: Offices for Decentralisation projects
- Transport: Metro North, Metro West, Roads projects

The indicative value of these projects will be included in the project tracker when the projects reach the appropriate stage of procurement. A number of the projects are listed already in the tracker. Under the system of delegated sanction for capital expenditure, responsibility and accountability for individual projects rests with the individual Department/Agency involved. It would be a matter for the relevant Department/Agency involved to consider the provision of information on the commercial value of individual PPP projects in operation.

Tax Code.

113. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance his views on reviewing the vehicle registration tax being charged for personnel currently involved in the taxi industry who buy a wheelchair accessible taxi in view of the costs involved in terms of converting a normal

[Deputy Brian Hayes.]

taxi to a wheelchair accessible taxi and the fact that in recent years the number of wheelchair accessible taxis has reduced rapidly; if he will consider this proposal as a means of encouraging the number of wheelchair accessible taxis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28073/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): I have no plans to reduce or eliminate VRT on taxis. In this regard, it should be recognised that tax reliefs have proved at times to be a blunt, inflexible and expensive means of providing assistance and achieving policy aims which might be more effectively achieved through regulatory or direct expenditure means. VRT on vehicles helps to broaden the tax base and provides an important source of Exchequer revenue. I am asked regularly to introduce tax reliefs for one purpose or another, but to accede to all such requests would lead to an immediate narrowing of the tax base.

Disabled Drivers.

114. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance when a decision will be made on an appeal on an application for a primary medical certificate by a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary. [28078/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): The initial application for a Primary Medical Certificate under the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994, is made to the Senior Medical Officer of the relevant local Health Service Executive administrative area. If the Primary Medical Certificate has been refused in this case, the named person may appeal the refusal to the Medical Board of Appeal, National Rehabilitation Hospital, Rochestown Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. I would point out that the Medical Board of Appeal is independent in the exercise of its functions.

Tax Collection.

115. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the number of landlords of private rented dwellings not paying the appro-

priate tax against whom action was taken during 2006; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28121/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that during 2006 there were 527 audits of Landlords or persons returning Rental Income and these cases produced audit yield of €4.74m. These cases included persons with a variety of rental income, e.g. from commercial lettings. Revenue is not in a position to say how many of these cases were landlords of private rented dwellings.

116. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the number of personnel in the Revenue Commissioners who specifically investigate non-compliance in the private rented sector where a high percentage of landlords fail to register as required and are not paying the taxes due from them. [28122/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that as Revenue staff are not specifically engaged in investigating non-compliance in any particular sector at any one time, it is not possible to provide the information requested by the Deputy. Staff engaged in compliance and enforcement units are organised in multi disciplinary teams engaged in a broad range of activities to combat non-compliance. I am assured by Revenue that they are taking all necessary steps to tackle non-compliance by landlords in the private rented sector.

Ministerial Staff.

117. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by his Department on 1 November 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28153/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): At 1 November 2002, the following staff were employed by my predecessor Mr. Charlie McCreevy, T.D. in this Department.

Name	Title	Date of appointment	Annual Salary Range	Allow-ance
Dermot Ryan	Press Officer	20 June 2002	€51,133 – €63,939	10% basic salary
Noeleen McCreevy	Personal Secretary	7 June 2002	€17,106 – €33,003	10% basic salary
Michael Fitzpatrick	Personal Assistant	7 June 2002	€20,971 – €35,303	

118. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed

by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28168/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): The following are details of staff appointed by me.

Name	Title	Date of appointment	Annual Salary Range	Allow-ance
Gerry Steadman	Special Adviser	30 September 2004	€99,195	10% basic salary
Colin Hunt	Special Adviser	13 September 2006 – 14 June 2007	€160,942*	
John Conlon	Press Officer	11 November 2004	€69,179 – €86,504	
Sinead Dooley	Personal Secretary	8 October 2004	€44,314 – €56,250	
Elaine Hogan	Personal Assistant	11 October 2004	€29,093 – €46,167	

* Mr Colin Hunt concurrently provided Special Adviser role to myself and the Minister for Transport. He was engaged under a single contract of employment with the Minister for Transport and was paid by that Department.

Tax Code.

119. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance if he has proposals to allow elderly persons who incur expenditure on essential home improvement and repair works to reclaim the VAT on such expenditure. [28255/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): The position is that the VAT treatment of goods and services is governed by EU law with which Irish VAT law must comply. The rate of VAT that applies to a particular good or service is determined by the nature of the good or service, and not by the status of the customer. There is no provision in European VAT law that would allow the application of an exemption or reduction of VAT on supplies of goods or services to customers over a certain age.

However, the Deputy may be aware that local authorities already provide grants to assist in the provision and adaptation of accommodation to meet the needs of the elderly and people with a disability. These grants cover such works as access ramps, stairlifts, installation of downstairs toilet facilities, accessible bathrooms and extensions. In addition, the Housing Aid for Older People Grant Scheme implements the Government decision to transfer the Special Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme from the HSE to the Local Authority sector by amalgamating it with the Essential Repairs Grant Scheme. The aim of the scheme is to assist older people living in poor housing conditions to have essential repairs or improvements carried out. The maximum grant under this scheme is €10,500 and may cover 100% of the approved cost of the works for applicants with an annual household income of less than €30,000 tapering to 30% for those with annual household incomes of between €54,001 to €65,000. This grant covers such works as structural repairs, rewiring, replacement of doors and windows, provision of water and sanitary services, and other repair or improvement works which are considered essential.

120. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance if all taxpayers will benefit equally from increases in personal tax cre-

aits in budget 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28283/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): It is long-standing practice of the Minister for Finance not to comment in advance of the Budget on any tax or expenditure matters that might be the subject of Budget decisions. I do not intend to depart from this approach.

121. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance if he will remove capital gains tax on the disposal of farm land to local authorities for road building or road widening provided the proceeds of the compensation are reinvested in farm business assets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28284/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): I assume that the Deputy has in mind the re-introduction of roll-over relief. It was announced in the 2003 Budget that no roll-over relief would be allowed for any purpose on gains arising from disposals on or after 4 December 2002. This relief was introduced when CGT rates were much higher than current levels. The abolition of this relief was in accordance with the overall taxation policy of widening the tax base in order to keep direct tax rates low.

As the Deputy will be aware, there is already in place a generous package of reliefs that continue to be available to the farming sector. As you will also be aware, it is a long standing tradition that the Minister for Finance does not comment on taxation matters in advance of the annual Budget.

Departmental Properties.

122. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the status of the refurbishment of the Steward's House in the grounds of Farmleigh by the Office of Public Works; the use the house is currently being put to; if the Office of Public Works has considered using the house as an official residence for An Taoiseach either now or at any point in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28390/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Noel Ahern): Work on the refurbishment of the Steward's House at Farmleigh is complete. The refurbishment was carried out to enhance the guest facilities on the estate. The Steward's House is used to provide additional accommodation as part of the overall Farmleigh complex but separate from the main house. There are no plans to use the house as an official residence for An Taoiseach.

Disabled Drivers.

123. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the reason for the delay in granting approval from the Revenue authorities to a centre (details supplied) in County Carlow in respect of a vehicle for the urgent and essential purpose of transporting sheltered workshop trainees to and from the place of training; and if he will intervene to finalise this matter in view of the length of time taken to bring about a resolution. [28423/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that in the absence of a reply to a query raised in relation to a claim under the Disabled Drivers and the Disabled Passengers [Tax Concessions] Regulations, 1994, this case could not be finalised. Following reminders issued by Revenue's Central Repayments Office a satisfactory reply was received from the named organisation on 7 November 2007 and a repayment in respect of the vehicle in question issued on 8 November 2007.

Tax Code.

124. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance his views on extending the period for the reclaim of VAT from four years to six years as recommended by the Joint Committee on Finance and Public Service, in the Finance Bill 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28424/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): I have noted the recommendation of the Joint Committee on Finance and the Public Service regarding the time limit for claiming refunds of overpaid tax. My predecessor as Minister for Finance examined the whole question of taxpayers' entitlement to repayment of tax and interest with a view to introducing, in so far as practicable, a uniform scheme which was fair and reasonable for taxpayers, and which also took into account the position of the Exchequer. On foot of that review, a new provision was introduced in Finance Act, 2003 (Section 17) which for the first time gave taxpayers a general right to repayment of tax overpaid subject to a 4 year claim limitation period. This became effective for

all claims received on or after 01 January 2005. At the same time the right of the Revenue Commissioners to raise assessments and make enquiries was also reduced to a 4 year period, apart from cases where fraud or neglect is suspected. The scheme was devised after careful and detailed consideration. It was designed to achieve the necessary balance between establishing a fair and uniform system for taxpayers, while, at the same time, providing the necessary protection for the Exchequer from exposure to claims going back many years.

Overall, I am satisfied that the current provision is both fair and reasonable and I have no plans to amend the legislation in this area.

125. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the position in relation to the application of stamp duty to first time buyers purchasing a site for the purposes of building a dwelling. [28512/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): First-time buyers are exempt from stamp duty when purchasing either new or second-hand residential properties. However, the purchase of land, which is not connected with a contract to build a house, attracts stamp duty at normal non-residential rates, regardless of the status of the purchaser. This is a long standing provision and recognises the fact that land is bought and sold for a variety of reasons.

Garda Stations.

126. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the plans the Office of Public Works has for the old Garda station in Enfield, County Meath; his views on giving priority for a lease-back agreement with local youth organisations in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28557/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Noel Ahern): The Gardaí are in occupation of the Garda Station at Enfield, Co. Meath. A site for a new Garda Station is being acquired from the E.S.B. Consideration of the future use of the existing Garda Station will be given in the context of planning for the new Station.

Tax Code.

127. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the anomaly whereby the high rate of VAT applies to photography on disc but the low rate applies to photography on slides, prints or negatives; if this disparity of treatment applies in all other EU countries; and his proposals to change this disparity of treatment. [28558/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): The position is that the VAT ratings of all goods and services are subject to the requirements of EU VAT law with which Irish VAT law must comply. Under the VAT Directive Member States may apply a reduced VAT rate to those goods and services which are listed in Annex III of the Directive. In addition, Member States may retain a reduced VAT rate for goods and services to which a reduced VAT rate applied on 1 January 1991 (the so called “parked rates”). Under the Sixth Schedule to the Value-Added Tax Act 1972, the supply of photographic prints, slides or negatives is subject to the reduced rate of VAT of 13.5%. Since this measure was introduced in 1987 prior to 1 January 1991, Ireland is allowed to maintain its treatment of such products.

However, digitised photographs were not included as a category of good that could be subject to the reduced rate as applied on 1 January 1991, nor are they included in Annex III of the VAT Directive. It is therefore not possible for Ireland to extend the reduced rate to photography on disk. Thus, photographs, etc on disk are subject to the standard rate of VAT of 21 per cent.

128. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance if the excise duty rebate will be removed; if so, the help that will be made available to the people most effected by this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28586/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): The 2003 EU Energy Tax Directive incorporated special derogations which allowed specific excise duty reliefs to be applied in a number of Member States. In the Irish context, these derogations allowed for reduced rates to apply to fuel used for public transport services which includes school transport services.

While these derogations expired on 31 December 2006, Ireland, along with other Member States, sought retention of its derogations beyond that date. However the European Commission, who are the deciding authority, have to date refused all such requests. The Commission maintain that, in keeping with the EU Energy Tax Directive, Member States must apply at least the EU minimum rates of excise on fuels in such circumstances and that any further favourable excise treatment is not allowable. At the Commission’s behest my officials have indicated that Ireland will avail of the forthcoming Finance Bill to make the necessary legislative changes to conform with the Directive.

In the circumstances, the relevant line Departments are exploring, in conjunction with my Department, alternative non-tax support mechanisms that could be put in place where appropriate

to maintain the assistance currently being provided subject of course to compatibility with EU State Aid requirements. In the interim the reduced rates applicable to fuel used will be maintained.

Tax Yield.

129. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the number of income tax payers in the State in each of the past ten years. [28659/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): It is assumed that what the Deputy requires are the numbers of income earners, both PAYE and self-employed, on the income tax record for the years in question who have a tax liability. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the relevant information is as shown in the table.

Numbers of income earners 1997/98 to 2007 (rounded to the nearest hundred)

Tax Year	Income earners with a tax liability	All income earners
1997/98	1,112,600	1,493,000
1998/99	1,187,000	1,584,900
1999/2000	1,208,500	1,667,200
2000/2001	1,262,600	1,765,000
2001*	1,262,000	1,790,000
2002	1,252,300	1,885,000
2003	1,277,900	1,927,200
2004	1,332,900	2,013,700
2005 **	1,372,700	2,113,200
2006 **	1,421,000	2,205,100
2007**	1,417,400	2,285,400

* Short tax “year” from 6th April 2001 to 31st December 2001.

**Provisional and likely to be revised.

The figures for the years 1997/1998 to 2004 inclusive are based on incomes data derived from income tax returns held on Revenue records and have been grossed-up to an overall expected level to adjust for incompleteness in the numbers of returns on record at the time the data was extracted for analytical purposes. For the years 2005 to-date, the figures are estimates from the Revenue tax forecasting model using actual data for the year 2004 adjusted as necessary for income and employment growth for the years in question. It should be noted that a married couple who has elected or has been deemed to have elected for joint assessment is counted as one tax unit.

130. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the number of workers who paid no tax in 2006 and the estimated

[Deputy Arthur Morgan.]

number for 2007, as a consequence of earning the minimum wage or less. [28660/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): The minimum wage in 2006 was €7.65 per hour. On an annualised basis, this is equivalent to €15,514.20 assuming a 39 hour working week. In 2006 the entry point to income tax under the PAYE system was €15,600 per annum for a single person under 65. The current minimum wage is €8.65 per hour. On an annualised basis, this is equivalent to €17,542.20 assuming a 39 hour working week.

The present entry point to income tax under the PAYE system is €17,600 per annum for a single person under 65. The position is, therefore, that an employee earning the minimum wage who benefits from entitlement to the employee (PAYE) tax credit in addition to the basic personal tax credit would not pay income tax in 2006 or 2007. The number of PAYE income earners earning the equivalent of the minimum wage in its annualised form or less, who paid no income tax is estimated 556,000 and 619,000 for 2006 and 2007, respectively. These figures do not take into account those earners who earned the applicable minimum wage rate, which is an hourly rate, but who, through overtime working or bonus payments would have earned more than the minimum wage in its annualised form. The figures are provisional and likely to be revised. It should be noted that a married couple that has elected or has been deemed to have elected for joint assessment is counted as one tax unit.

131. **Deputy Shane McEntee** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance the annual tax yield in 2004, 2005 and 2006 from vehicle registration tax, tax on motor fuels, value added tax on new vehicles and motor tax. [28715/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the relevant information available is the amount of tax revenues collected as Mineral Oil Tax (excise) and VRT in respect of motor vehicles. The information furnished with VAT returns does not require the yield from a particular sector or sub-sector of trade to be identified. However, the estimated receipts of VAT from cars and motor fuels are included in the attached schedule.

	2004	2005	2006
	€ m	€ m	€ m
Petrol			
Excise	971	1,002	1,026
Estimated VAT	328	368	443
Total	1,299	1,370	1,469
Auto Diesel			
Excise	871	921	1,017
Estimated VAT	38	46	54
Total	909	967	1,071
Motor Vehicles			
Vehicle Registration Tax	946	1,149	1,287
Estimated VAT	480	559	600
Total	1,426	1,708	1,887
Motor Tax	747	802	880

Pension Provisions.

132. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance if, in respect of appendix D of the Green Paper on pensions, he will provide the same information in respect of PRSAs and RACs for 2004 and subsequent years if available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28725/07]

Tánaiste and Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Cowen): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the latest relevant information available is in respect of income tax relief allowed for contributions to Retirement Annuity Contracts (RACs) and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (PRSAs) for the income tax year 2004. RACs and PRSAs are available to the self-employed and to employees not in occupational pension schemes.

The information is set out in tables following this reply which provide the number of cases, amount of deduction and reduction in tax for tax relief for RACs and PRSAs for the various contribution ranges. The information is based on income returns contained in Revenue records at the time the data were compiled for analytical purposes, representing about 96 % of all returns expected. A married couple who has elected or has deemed to have elected for joint assessment is counted as one tax unit.

INCOME TAX 2004

Personal Retirement Savings Accounts — by range of Gross Income

Range of gross income		Totals			Gross Tax *	Reduction in tax as % of Gross Tax
From	To	Number of cases	Amount of deduction	Reduction in tax		
€	€		€	€	€	%
—	9,000	70	93,541	1,358	1,358	100.0
9,000	10,000	23	34,212	4,084	4,151	98.4
10,000	12,000	47	59,668	8,782	14,345	61.2
12,000	15,000	109	156,084	23,463	60,472	38.8
15,000	17,000	108	156,647	26,451	76,749	34.5
17,000	20,000	218	313,198	56,805	230,599	24.6
20,000	25,000	413	690,775	135,922	665,317	20.4
25,000	27,000	172	287,233	56,570	378,181	15.0
27,000	30,000	284	523,396	118,565	732,503	16.2
30,000	35,000	489	1,152,111	347,802	1,748,498	19.9
35,000	40,000	441	1,248,937	423,812	2,141,621	19.8
40,000	50,000	714	2,339,244	792,111	4,750,534	16.7
50,000	60,000	616	2,500,273	830,654	5,568,932	14.9
60,000	75,000	696	3,534,383	1,381,517	8,683,997	15.9
75,000	100,000	688	4,800,375	1,999,963	13,239,785	15.1
100,000	150,000	479	5,027,306	2,111,215	15,236,926	13.9
150,000	200,000	196	3,179,530	1,334,563	10,016,144	13.3
200,000	250,000	97	2,387,407	1,000,621	6,516,038	15.4
Over	250,000	188	6,011,514	2,524,836	24,927,049	10.1
Totals		6,048	34,495,834	13,179,094	94,993,199	13.9

* "Gross tax" means the tax that would be due **before** relief is allowed for retirement annuity deductions

*Figures for PRSAs reflect the relative early stage of the scheme which was introduced in 2002

INCOME TAX 2004

Retirement Annuity — by range of Gross Income

Range of gross income		Totals			Gross Tax *	Reduction in tax as % of Gross Tax
From	To	Number of cases	Amount of deduction	Reduction in tax		
€	€		€	€	€	%
—	9,000	1,110	1,765,598	100,854	102,717	98.2
9,000	10,000	328	473,530	50,209	57,629	87.1
10,000	12,000	801	1,200,100	159,282	233,815	68.1
12,000	15,000	1,768	2,856,885	429,099	888,466	48.3
15,000	17,000	1,584	2,707,813	413,367	1,051,539	39.3
17,000	20,000	3,071	5,511,150	965,686	2,972,946	32.5
20,000	25,000	6,644	12,238,635	2,317,360	9,500,847	24.4
25,000	27,000	3,053	6,086,998	1,181,864	5,673,140	20.8
27,000	30,000	4,871	10,061,022	2,170,195	11,018,835	19.7
30,000	35,000	8,440	19,287,364	5,246,701	26,229,043	20.0
35,000	40,000	8,222	21,768,107	6,367,368	34,470,680	18.5
40,000	50,000	14,592	46,359,976	14,805,949	85,717,764	17.3
50,000	60,000	12,061	45,846,330	14,774,520	97,776,506	15.1

[Deputy Brian Cowen.]

Range of gross income		Totals			Gross Tax *	Reduction in tax as % of Gross Tax
From	To	Number of cases	Amount of deduction	Reduction in tax		
€	€		€	€	€	%
60,000	75,000	13,518	67,197,523	25,455,241	157,205,196	16.2
75,000	100,000	11,856	85,513,976	35,192,079	215,796,004	16.3
100,000	150,000	8,570	108,705,843	45,430,331	264,196,851	17.2
150,000	200,000	3,429	73,550,192	30,834,464	174,218,301	17.7
200,000	250,000	2,052	63,087,562	26,460,842	141,462,364	18.7
Over	250,000	4,526	224,633,570	94,263,399	669,190,258	14.1
Totals		110,496	798,852,174	306,618,810	1,897,762,901	16.2

* "Gross tax" means the tax that would be due **before** relief is allowed for retirement annuity deductions

Child Care Services.

133. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will approve a staffing grant for a child care group (details supplied) in County Roscommon which will be forced to close down operations at Christmas 2007 due to the lack of financial support from the State; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28662/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Brendan Smith): As the Deputy will be aware, I have responsibility for the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 — 2006 (EOCP) and the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006 — 2010 (NCIP), which are being implemented by the Office of the Minister for Children.

The Group in question applied for interim support funding under the NCIP and were declined in September 2007 as their application had not demonstrated sufficient ability to efficiently manage and sustain the service from September 2007 and therefore did not meet the requirements of the NCIP interim support scheme. The Group was invited to contact their local City/County Childcare Committee should they wish to apply for funding under the new Community Childcare Subvention Scheme which will come into effect in January 2008. I understand that the Group requested a review of this decision and will be informed of the outcome shortly.

The interim support scheme under the NCIP was introduced as an interim measure pending the introduction of the new Community Childcare Subvention Scheme, to facilitate Groups which were unable to meet the contractual deadline of December 2006 for funding under the EOCP staffing support scheme.

Health Services.

134. **Deputy Margaret Conlon** asked the Minister for Health and Children if there are plans to

examine the criteria for eligibility for home care to ensure that it meets patient needs. [28721/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

135. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if school medical examinations are being carried out with the desired degree of frequency throughout the country; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28757/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I am informed by the Health Service Executive that a reply has already issued to the Deputy.

Mental Health Services.

136. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she is satisfied regarding the availability of child psychiatric services throughout the country with particular reference to the individual needs of schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28758/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Jimmy Devins): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004 and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall

vote. The Executive, therefore, is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Pharmacy Regulations.

137. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a meeting will be held between the Health Service Executive and the pharmacists on the issue of the pharmacy contract and the price paid to pharmacists for medicines; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28881/07]

191. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she is engaging in discussions with the Irish Pharmaceutical Union regarding the issue of contracts between pharmacists and the Health Service Executive; if discussions are ongoing; if she is confident that prescription drugs will be available to people on the medical card scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28517/07]

198. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has a plan in place for the forthcoming potential strike by pharmacists; if she has been in talks with the IPU on this matter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28630/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 137, 191 and 198 together.

My Department understands that the Health Service Executive (HSE) has not received formal notification from any community pharmacist regarding cessation of services under the GMS and community drugs schemes. I have previously outlined in detail to the Oireachtas the legal provisions under competition law which prevent the HSE from negotiating with the Irish Pharmaceutical Union (IPU) on fees, prices or margins for their members. When it became clear that the HSE could not negotiate with pharmacists or wholesalers on fees or margins, a detailed, fair and transparent consultation process, including independent economic analysis and public consultation, was carried out to inform the final determination of the new reimbursement pricing arrangements for drugs and medicines under the GMS and community drugs schemes. These new arrangements were announced by the HSE on 17th September 2007.

To address concerns expressed by the IPU, on behalf of community pharmacists, about the implications of the legal advice on competition law on their right to negotiate fees through the Union, a process of dialogue was established,

chaired by Bill Shipsey SC, to explore ways in which concerns raised by the IPU about the implications of this legal advice might be addressed. Despite suspension of this process during the recent withdrawal by individual pharmacists of methadone services, there has recently been renewed engagement between the Irish Pharmaceutical Union and the HSE under the auspices of Mr. Shipsey.

In regard to the new reimbursement prices, the main wholesaler companies have confirmed to the HSE that they will charge community pharmacists the same price for these drugs and medicines as pharmacists will be reimbursed by the HSE for these products. Furthermore, there are no changes planned by the HSE to the operation of the GMS medical card and community drugs schemes, and all patients continue to receive their entitlements in the normal way.

General Medical Services Scheme.

138. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that in the event of the death of a general practitioner, a patient must await the appointment of a new permanent doctor before transferring to another panel and that this creates the anomaly that the transfer may take considerably longer than the normal three month period required to transfer to a new doctor; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28048/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Under the Health Act 2004, the management and delivery of health and personal social services are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive. This includes responsibility for the provision of General Practitioner services under the General Medical Services Scheme. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to address this matter and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Medical Cards.

139. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the income limits for medical card eligibility in each of the past five years; and her plans to increase the current limits. [28051/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Medical cards are made available to persons and their dependants who would otherwise experience undue hardship in meeting the cost of General Practitioner (GP) services. In 2005 the GP visit card was introduced as a graduated benefit so that people on lower incomes, particularly parents of young children, who do not qualify for a medical card would not be deterred on cost grounds from visiting their GP.

[Deputy Mary Harney.]

Persons aged 70 and over are statutorily entitled to a medical card, regardless of income. In all other cases an assessment of means is undertaken.

Since the beginning of 2005 I have introduced a number of significant changes to the manner in which the assessment for medical cards and GP visit cards is undertaken. The assessment guidelines have been increased by a cumulative 29%. Applications are now considered on the basis of income net of tax and PRSI and allowance is made for reasonable expenses incurred in respect of mortgage/rent, child care and travel to work. In June 2006, I agreed with the Health Service Executive (HSE) a further adjustment to the assessment guidelines for GP visit cards and these are now 50% higher than those used in respect of medical cards.

The Programme for Government commits to the following: Indexing the income thresholds for medical cards to increases in the average industrial wage; Implementation of an annual publicity campaign and making applications easier so as to increase uptake amongst those who are eligible for Medical Cards and GP Visit Cards; Doubling of the income limit eligibility of parents of children under 6 years of age, and trebling them for parents of children under 18 years of age with an intellectual disability; Allowing people with disabilities to work without losing key essential medical card cover after 3 years. My Department is at present considering the steps required to enable these commitments to be implemented.

My Department is also examining the steps necessary to give effect to the Towards 2016 commitment to review the eligibility criteria for the assessment of medical cards in the context of medical, social and economic/financial need with a view to clarifying entitlement to a medical card. I attach a table showing medical card assessment guidelines increases over the past 5 years.

Year	Single Person (under 66, living alone)	Married Couple (under 66)
	€	€
2002	132.00	190.50
2003	138.00	200.00
2004	142.50	206.50
2005 (Jan.)	153.50	222.00
2005 (Oct.)	184.00	266.50

Hospital Services.

140. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding seriously ill public cancer patients in accessing services; and if she will clarify the alleged claim that private patients get priority in accessing consultants. [28052/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The implementation of the National Cancer Control Programme is a major priority for me and for this Government. I fully support the appointment by the Health Service Executive (HSE) of Prof. Tom Keane as Interim National Cancer Control Director. The delivery of cancer services on a programmatic basis will serve to ensure equity of access to services and equality of patient outcome. The Programme will address regional disparities in cancer treatment, identify gaps in the provision of existing services and develop a national approach to timely access to diagnostic services for cancer.

I am firmly of the view that seriously ill cancer patients should be seen and treated solely on the basis of medical priority.

141. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if private hospitals comply with minimum standards such as the recently approved national quality assurance standards for symptomatic breast disease services; and if a private hospital be in a position to offer full breast care services to women, that is, surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy. [28053/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Last June, I approved National Quality Assurance Standards for Symptomatic Breast Disease Services under the Health Act 2007. I have called on hospitals in the independent sector to take steps to ensure that their breast cancer services comply with these Standards and I have brought the Standards to the attention of private healthcare insurers.

In January 2007, I established the Commission on Patient Safety and Quality Assurance to develop proposals for a health service wide system of governance based on corporate accountability for the quality and safety of all health services. One of its terms of reference is to specifically examine and make recommendations in relation to a statutory system of licensing for public and private health care providers and services.

Site Acquisitions.

142. **Deputy Michael Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding the Health Service Executive's negotiations with Fingal County Council in relation to the acquisition of a site for the provision of a primary care network centre in the Castlelands area of Balbriggan; the acreage of land sought; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28062/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Primary Care Strategy aims to increase health service capacity through the development of services in the community to give people direct access to integrated multi-disciplinary teams of general practitioners, nurses,

home helps, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and others. It has been estimated that up to 95% of people's health and social services needs can be properly met within a primary care setting and the establishment of new Primary Care Teams can contribute greatly to enhancing community based health services.

The provision of the appropriate infrastructure to facilitate the delivery of primary care services is being considered by the HSE, having regard to a number of factors. These include the type and configuration of the services involved, the mixed public/private nature of our health system, the suitability of existing infrastructure and the capital requirements of the health services generally over the coming years.

As the Health Service Executive has the operational and funding responsibility for Primary Care services, it is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Child Care Services.

143. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of children currently living here whose parents are claiming the early child care supplement on their behalf; and the cost of same for each quarter since the scheme was introduced. [28085/07]

144. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of children who do not currently reside here but whose parents are claiming the early child care supplement on their behalf; and the cost of same for each quarter since the scheme was introduced. [28086/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Brendan Smith): I propose to take Questions Nos. 143 and 144 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, my Office has responsibility for the Early Childcare Supplement (ECS), which is paid in respect of all children under the age of 6 who are qualified for Child Benefit. This payment is administered on behalf of my Office on an agency basis by the Department of Social & Family Affairs, which has provided me with the figures in the following tables. This payment and Child Benefit are the universal supports to all parents, which assist them with their child care costs.

It may be noted that at current levels, payments are made under EU Regulations in respect of 885 non-resident children, which costs €221,250 per quarter, and payments are made in respect of 411,947 children resident in the State which costs €106,308,358. This means that 0.2% of payments are in respect of non-resident children, and I am informed that nearly half of those children are resident in Northern Ireland.

However there is a significant number of Child Benefit claims on hand which are subject to EU Regulations and, when these are processed, the cost of payments in respect of such children may give rise to a slight increase in the total figure for Child Benefit, depending on the outcome of those applications, with a similar proportion arising in respect of the ECS.

The tables contain the data regarding the numbers of resident and non-resident children and the cost per quarter since introduction of the ECS. It should be noted that the "Cost" is the total paid in that quarter and "children paid" refers to the number of children in payment at the end of each quarter and does not reflect those paid arrears during the quarter.

Numbers of resident children in receipt of ECS

Quarter	Number of children paid	Cost
		€
Q2 2006	374,523	93,630,750
Q3 2006	384,180	97,274,669
Q4 2006	396,058	101,511,905
Q1 2007	389,133	101,946,328
Q2 2007	406,375	107,010,654
Q3 2007	411,947	106,308,358

Numbers of non resident children in receipt of ECS.

Quarter	Number of children paid	Cost
		€
Q2 2006	481	120,250
Q3 2006	513	128,250
Q4 2006	578	144,500
Q1 2007	658	164,500
Q2 2007	725	181,250
Q3 2007	885	221,250

Vaccination Programme.

145. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children, further to Parliamentary Question No. 168 of 3 October 2007, when she expects to receive the final report of the vaccine damage group; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28091/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Group is continuing with its consideration of this matter, and is consulting with a number of representative bodies and individuals, and I look forward to receiving their final recommendations when their work is complete.

Health Repayment Scheme.

146. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Mini-

[Deputy Denis Naughten.]

ster for Health and Children the reason an application to the health repayment scheme is deemed null and void when the elderly person in question passes away; the way the scheme will overcome this issue after 31 December 2007 when no new applications will be received; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28098/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): In instances where the Health Service Executive (HSE) submits an application on behalf of a patient in its care and the patient subsequently passes away prior to a repayment being made, the application is discontinued. A further application is then submitted on behalf of the estate of the deceased person. This application identifies the person to whom the repayment should be made and also enables the amount of repayment offered to be appealed if the applicant wishes.

My Department is in consultation with the Attorney General's office regarding the making of regulations under Section 20 of the Health (Repayment Scheme) Act 2006 which will allow the personal representative to continue an application in their own name if the relevant person dies prior to a repayment being made. These regulations will allow the personal representative to continue with the original application and will not require a new application to be submitted after the closing date for the scheme.

Hospital Waiting Lists.

147. **Deputy Edward O'Keefe** asked the Minister for Health and Children if a person (details supplied) in County Cork who was told they would have to wait six to 12 months will be urgently provided with an appointment for an MRI scan. [28109/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular case raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy. Patients waiting more than three months on a surgical waiting list or, in some case, for an MRI scan, may qualify for treatment under the National Treatment Purchase Fund. It is open to the person in question or anyone acting on their behalf to contact the Fund directly in relation to their case.

Medical Cards.

148. **Deputy Edward O'Keefe** asked the Minister for Health and Children if a person (details supplied) in County Cork will have their circum-

stances regarding outstanding medical expenses reviewed. [28110/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Under the Health Act 2004, the management and delivery of health and personal social services are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive. This includes operational responsibility for the medical card and GP visit card. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to address this matter and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Nursing Home Subventions.

149. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will advise persons (details supplied) in Dublin 11 on a matter. [28136/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hootor): If the individual in question is considering nursing home care, then she should be made aware that the Minister announced a new Nursing Home Support Scheme — A Fair Deal — on 11 December 2006.

The proposed new scheme aims to remedy the inequities that exist in the current system. At present, people face greatly different costs depending on whether they are in public or private nursing homes. In addition, individual contributions in public places are based on a flat rate regardless of an individual's wealth, whereas State support for individuals in private places is based on means-testing. This means that many people in private nursing homes get no support, and even with subvention, people can face costs they cannot afford. The result is that some people are forced to sell or mortgage their homes to pay for care costs.

In contrast, the new Nursing Home Support Scheme will ensure that long-term residential care is affordable for all who need it. Contributions during a person's life will be affordable and they will not have to sell or mortgage their house to meet the contribution. Furthermore, a person's family will not have to contribute towards the cost of their care. Under the new Nursing Home Support Scheme, people who require long-term residential care will contribute up to 80% of their assessable income, whether for public or private nursing home care. Depending on the amount of a person's assessable income, there will also be a contribution of up to 5% of a person's assets.

The portion of the contribution relating to assets, such as a person's house, may be deferred. This means that it does not have to be met during the person's lifetime and can be payable on settlement of the person's estate instead. The deferred contribution will be based on the actual number of weeks spent in residential care and on the cost of care and, consequently, may be less than 5%

per annum. I would take this opportunity to emphasise that no one will pay more than the cost of their care.

In addition, where the deferred contribution applies to the principal private residence, it will be capped at a maximum of 15%, or 7.5% in the case of one spouse remaining in the home while the other enters long-term residential care. This means that after three years in care, a person will not be liable for any further deferred charge on the principal residence. It also means that 85% of the value of the principal residence will be maintained for the beneficiaries of the person's estate. This is not something that can be guaranteed at the moment.

A person or his/her family can also choose to pay the charge at the time when care is being received instead of allowing it to be levied upon the estate if they so wish. Where a spouse or certain dependants are living in the principal residence, the charge can be further deferred until after the death of that spouse or dependant or until such time as a person previously qualifying as a dependant ceases to qualify as such.

The Department is currently preparing a Bill for the new Nursing Home Support Scheme. It is intended to publish the Bill for the scheme in November, and to have the legislation in place by 1 January 2008. The Health Service Executive will have responsibility for the administration and operation of the scheme. Accordingly, I would advise the individual in question to contact her local HSE Office that deals with nursing home queries. They are based in St. Mary's Hospital, Phoenix Park, Dublin 20. The phone number is 01-6778132.

Name	Title	Annual Salary
		€
Christy Mannion	Advisor to Minister Martin	59,990
Deirdre Gillane	Advisor to Minister Martin	70,142
Elizabeth O'Donoghue	Personal Secretary to Minister Martin	35,706
Melanie Hewitt	Personal Assistant to Minister Martin	19,681
Ann Donnelly	Personal Assistant to Minister Martin	20,293
Maura Cosgrove	Personal Assistant to Minister of State Lenihan	34,980
Marian Quinlan	Personal Secretary to Minister of State Lenihan	29,869
Sinead Teefy	Personal Assistant to Minister of State O'Malley	39,979
Mary Hayes	Personal Secretary to Minister of State O'Malley	32,739
Patricia Smith	Personal Secretary to Minister of State Callely	36,303
Evelyn Byrne	Personal Assistant to Minister of State Callely	32,583

In addition to the above, 2 Civilian Drivers were employed in the each of the Offices of Ministers of State Lenihan, O'Malley and Callely at an annual salary of €25,698 per driver.

152. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Health and Children the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers,

Departmental Reports.

150. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason the recent Indecon report commissioned by the Health Service Executive has not been published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28141/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004 and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. Therefore, the publication of the report mentioned by the Deputy is an issue for consideration by the Executive. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have a reply on this matter issued directly to the Deputy.

Ministerial Staff.

151. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Health and Children the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by her Department on 1 November 2002; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28155/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The table details the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officer, assistants and other political appointees who were employed in my Department on 1 November 2002.

press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by her; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28170/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The table details the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officer and other staff appointed by me in 2007.

[Deputy Mary Harney.]

Name	Title	Annual Salary
		€
Oliver O'Connor	Special Advisor	136,034
Patricia Ryan	Special Advisor	130,287
John O'Brien	Special Advisor/Programme Manager	169,415
Derek Cunningham	Special Advisor/Press Advisor	116,487
Catherine Dardis	Personal Assistant	56,859
Alan McGaughey	Personal Assistant	57,479

Hospital Services.

153. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of operating theatres in the Cork University Maternity Hospital; the number of these currently in use; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28182/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

154. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the new Da Vinci operating robot was commissioned at the Cork University Hospital; the cost of this machine; the number of times the machine has been used in robotic assisted surgery to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28183/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Staff.

155. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of gynaecologists based at the Cork University Maternity Hospital; the number of hours of operating theatre time each is allotted; the

number of patients awaiting gynaecological procedures at the CUH; the average waiting time for these procedures to be carried out; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28184/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Health Services.

156. **Deputy Michael Noonan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to an application by an organisation to the Health Service Executive for grant aid for fit-out costs for its new facility at Castletroy, Limerick which proved unsuccessful; if she will take appropriate action to provide grant aid for the fit-out to ensure that funding from a charitable foundation (details supplied) can be drawn down to secure the full cost of the project; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28196/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Jimmy Devins): The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy. As the Deputy may be aware an additional sum of €75m for revenue purposes was provided to the Health Service for Disability Services in the 2007 Budget. This amount incorporates the 2007 element of the Government's multi-annual investment programme for the National Disability Strategy. This Strategy is committed to enhancing, the level and range of multidisciplinary support services to

adults and children with an intellectual, physical and sensory disability and those with autism.

General Medical Services Scheme.

157. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that dentists are refusing to treat long-standing patients once they turn 70 and receive a medical card as part of GMS scheme, thereby forcing them to either pay for treatment they are entitled to or to find an alternative dentist; the number of dentists in the Dublin region who are refusing to participate in the GMS scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28202/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Persons aged seventy years and over are automatically entitled to a medical card irrespective of means. These medical card holders are entitled to, among other things, a range of dental services under the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) from participating dentists holding contracts with the Health Service Executive (HSE). Not all dentists hold DTSS contracts, as they may not wish to provide services under the Scheme.

Since the DTSS Review Group was established in May, 2006, to undertake a comprehensive review of Primary Care Oral Health Services, a legal issue has arisen with regard to the Competition Act, 2002 as it relates to the negotiation of professional fees. The issues involved are complex and my officials are working with the Attorney General's office to clarify the way forward. In regard to the Deputy's question concerning the number of dentists in the Dublin region who are refusing to participate in the DTSS, I have asked the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the HSE to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities.

158. **Deputy John Cregan** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the Health Service Executive will make funding available for a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28222/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Jimmy Devins): The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy. As the Deputy may be aware an additional sum of €75m for revenue purposes was provided to the Health

Service Executive for Disability Services in the 2007 Budget. This amount incorporates the 2007 element of the Government's multi-annual investment programme for the National Disability Strategy. This Strategy is committed to enhancing, the level and range of multi-disciplinary support services to adults and children with an intellectual, physical and sensory disability and those with autism.

Departmental Expenditure.

159. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children if it is intended that multi-annual budgeting will be introduced by the Health Service Executive; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28225/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): My colleague the Minister for Finance has been publishing Budgets on a multi-annual basis since 1997. Table 4A (page D10) of the Budget Book outlines the Government's budget position, including expenditure and revenue projections, on a three year basis. Each year's budget is framed in the context of the overall economic and budgetary position at the time. These figures are broken down by Ministerial Vote Group. In addition the Capital Investment programme is published on the basis of a five year envelope which promotes more effective planning and delivery of projects.

Hospital Staff.

160. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the third part-time nurse urgently required at the paediatric unit at Cork University Hospital cannot take up the post as their replacement is embargoed; and her views on the long-term consequences of the lack of early treatment for the 275 children diagnosed with insulin dependent diabetes who attend the unit. [28226/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Health Repayment Scheme.

161. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children when it is intended that the payments will be made to a person (details supplied) in County Cork under the health repay-

[Deputy Ciarán Lynch.]

ment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28227/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Health Service Executive has responsibility for administering the Repayment Scheme and the information sought by the Deputy relates to matters within the area of responsibility of the Executive. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued to the Deputy.

Health Service Allowances.

162. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children if there is a statutory requirement for community welfare officers to retain records in regard to rent allowance payments; the period that such records must be kept for; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28228/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Section 65 of the Health Act, 2004 deals with the preservation of orders, notices, rules, records, etc. This would include any statutory requirement for community welfare officers to retain records in regard to rent allowance payments. My Department has therefore requested the HSE to investigate the matter raised by the Deputy in relation to any statutory requirement that may exist and to reply directly to him.

Communications Masts.

163. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding the safety of masts near residential areas and their public health implications. [28229/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The consensus of scientific opinion to date regarding possible adverse health effects from electromagnetic fields (EMF) exposure from mobile phone masts is that there is no evidence of a causal relationship between such exposure and ill health. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has assessed the many reviews carried out in this area and has indicated that exposures below the limits recommended by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) in their 1998 Guidelines do not produce any known adverse health effects. These guidelines are based on a careful analysis of all peer-reviewed scientific literature and include thermal and non-thermal effects.

In 1999, the European Community introduced recommendations on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields, based on the ICNIRP guidelines. Ireland complies with these recommendations. The Com-

mission for Communication Regulations (ComReg) monitors compliance with regard to telecommunication masts.

The Deputy may wish to note that approval for the erection of a mobile phone mast in a particular area is a matter for the local planning authority. Guidelines for Planning Authorities in relation to Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures are a matter for my colleague the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Research is ongoing in relation to this issue and my Department will continue to monitor developments concerning the possible health effects of exposure to electromagnetic fields.

Services for People with Disabilities.

164. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding a project (details supplied). [28230/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Jimmy Devins): The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy. As the Deputy may be aware an additional sum of €75m for revenue purposes was provided to the Health Service Executive for Disability Services in the 2007 Budget. This amount incorporates the 2007 element of the Government's multi-annual investment programme for the National Disability Strategy. This Strategy is committed to enhancing, the level and range of multi-disciplinary support services to adults and children with an intellectual, physical and sensory disability and those with autism.

Hospital Waiting Lists.

165. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the average waiting time for public cancer patients accessing radiotherapy treatment, broken down by hospital or by region; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28238/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular question in relation to waiting times raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to have a reply issued

directly to the Deputy in relation to the matter raised.

Youth Services.

166. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will make funding available to youth cafés to support them in their works; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28239/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Brendan Smith): Youth cafés offer great potential for providing a wide range of developmental, educational and information programmes to young people. The launch of the National Recreation Policy in September this year highlighted Government's commitment to the development of youth cafés. While a number of youth cafés have emerged around the country on an *ad hoc* basis, funded by a variety of providers, an integrated approach is now proposed in the provision of youth cafés. A number of steps are already in train to support this process.

A small survey of some of the existing youth cafés (around 20) has been completed by my Office to establish vision, objectives, structures, governance, funding, staffing, accessibility and overall usage. I have formally requested the National Children's Advisory Council's support in the production of a toolkit and guide to setting up a youth café. In the meantime, consideration is being given to how best develop a coherent structured programme for the development of youth cafés as well as the most appropriate lead agency for the management and administration of a funding scheme.

Services for People with Disabilities.

167. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act 2004 will be commenced; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that all special schools are being deprived of therapy posts in order that the Health Service Executive can allocate to the under fives so as to meet its obligation under the Disability Act 2005; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28247/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Jimmy Devins): The Deputy should be aware that it is a matter for the Minister for Education and Science to determine the timescale for the commencement of the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act 2004. In addition the second part of the Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the

Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Health Repayment Scheme.

168. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health and Children the amount a company (details supplied) is receiving to administer the health repayment scheme in conjunction with the Health Service Executive; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28259/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Health Service Executive (HSE) has responsibility for administering the health repayment scheme in conjunction with the appointed scheme administrator KPMG/McCann Fitzgerald. The HSE has advised that the private administration costs associated with the scheme are capped at €15 million exclusive of VAT and the Scheme Administrator has received €1 million to date in payment.

Medical Cards.

169. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason an appeal for a medical card by a person (details supplied) in County Louth is not being dealt with by the appeals office, Health Service Executive north east; and if this medical card will be granted due to the fact that the person suffers with schizophrenia. [28263/07]

185. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason an appeal for a medical card by a person (details supplied) in County Louth is not being dealt with by the appeals office, Health Service Executive north east; if this person's entitlement to a medical card can be established until such time as their case is examined; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28442/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 169 and 185 together.

Medical cards are made available to persons and their dependants who would otherwise experience undue hardship in meeting the cost of General Practitioner (GP) services. In 2005 the GP visit card was introduced as a graduated benefit so that people on moderate and lower incomes, particularly parents of young children, who do not qualify for a medical card would not be deterred on cost grounds from visiting their GP.

Since the beginning of 2005 substantial changes have been made to the way in which people's eligibility for a medical card is assessed and these apply equally to the assessment process for a GP visit card. The income guidelines have been increased by a cumulative 29% and in addition

[Deputy Mary Harney.]

allowance is now made for reasonable expenses incurred in respect of mortgage/rent, childcare and travel to work costs. In June 2006 I agreed a further adjustment to the income guidelines for GP visit cards. These are now 50% higher than those in respect of medical cards.

As the Health Service Executive has the operational and funding responsibility for these benefits, it is the appropriate body to consider the particular case raised by the Deputy. My Department has therefore requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to address this matter and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

170. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of appeals awaiting a decision by the Health Service Executive appeals north east area; the time scale for completion of appeals; the breakdown of outstanding appeals by category; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28264/07]

184. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of appeals awaiting a decision by the Health Service Executive appeals north east; if she will provide a breakdown of all appeals by county, category of appeal and length of time waiting; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28441/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 170 and 184 together.

The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Health Services.

171. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason patients in the National Rehabilitation Hospital are being refused funding, home care and nursing home packages to enable them to leave hospital, with the knock on effect of depriving access to other patients in need of the therapy which the NRH provides; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28274/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Jimmy Devins): The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive

to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

172. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding orthodontic treatment for a child (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28276/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Services Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists.

173. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be called for an appointment in University College Hospital, Galway. [28381/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular case raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this case investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Patients waiting more than three months on a surgical waiting list may qualify for treatment under the National Treatment Purchase Fund. It is open to the person in question or anyone acting on their behalf to contact the Fund directly in relation to their case.

Departmental Properties.

174. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding the provision of more suitable accommodation for the community welfare office at Mary Street, Dungarvan, County Waterford; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that this situation is being raised in Dáil Éireann since 2001 at least and that the building currently being used is unfit for human habitation and that it lacks basic wheelchair and toilet facilities; and if she will examine the situation personally with a view to providing reasonable alternative accommodation for both the community welfare officer and the members of the public who have to avail of the service. [28384/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004 and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. This includes responsibility for staff accommodation. My Department has therefore requested the HSE to investigate the matter raised by the Deputy in relation to the provision of more suitable accommodation for the community welfare office at Mary Street, Dungarvan, County Waterford and to reply directly to him

Health Repayment Scheme.

175. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that payments which have been approved under the national repayment scheme have been suspended until after Christmas 2007; if she will ensure that these payments recommence immediately bearing in mind that many elderly people are awaiting payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28385/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Health Service Executive (HSE) has responsibility for administering the health repayment scheme in conjunction with the appointed scheme administrator KPMG/McCann Fitzgerald. The HSE have informed me that they are unaware of any suspension of payments until after Christmas under the scheme. The Scheme Administrator and the HSE are confident that all claims submitted by eligible applicants by 31st December 2007 will be dealt with within the 2 year time frame allotted for the Scheme which is due to end in June 2008.

Medical Cards.

176. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the cost per year of increasing the medical card threshold by an additional €66 per week for a single person, €158.50 for a couple and €40 for each dependent child aged up to 18 as proposed by the Combat Poverty Agency. [28403/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Since the beginning of 2005 I have introduced a number of significant changes to the manner in which the assessment for medical cards and GP visit cards is undertaken. The assessment guidelines have been increased by a cumulative 29%. Applications are now considered on the basis of income net of tax and PRSI and allowance is made for reasonable expenses incurred in respect of mortgage/rent, childcare and travel to work. In June 2006, I agreed with the Health Service Executive (HSE) a further adjustment to the assessment guidelines for GP visit cards and

these are now 50% higher than those used in respect of medical cards.

My Department does not hold data which would enable the effect, and hence the cost, of implementing the proposals of Combat Poverty in relation to the assessment guidelines to be estimated.

The Programme for Government commits to the following:

- Indexing the income thresholds for medical cards to increases in the average industrial wage;
- Implementation of an annual publicity campaign and making applications easier so as to increase uptake amongst those who are eligible for Medical Cards and GP Visit Cards;
- Doubling of the income limit eligibility of parents of children under 6 years of age, and trebling them for parents of children under 18 years of age with an intellectual disability;
- Allowing people with disabilities to work without losing key essential medical card cover after 3 years.

My Department is at present considering the steps required to enable these commitments to be implemented. My Department is also examining the steps necessary to give effect to the Towards 2016 commitment to review the eligibility criteria for the assessment of medical cards in the context of medical, social and economic/financial need with a view to clarifying entitlement to a medical card.

Care of the Elderly.

177. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason for the delay in getting storage heaters connected to the ESB for a person (details supplied) in County Mayo. [28405/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive (HSE) under the Health Act 2004 and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. The HSE's responsibility includes the operation of the Housing Aid Scheme for the Elderly, on behalf of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular case raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Hospitals Building Programme.

178. **Deputy Margaret Conlon** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the location of the new regional hospital in the north east will be announced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28410/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004 and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Mental Health Services.

179. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the progress or otherwise being made in respect of implementation of the national mental health policy framework *A Vision for Change*; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28411/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Jimmy Devins): The Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy, “*A Vision for Change*”, which was launched in January 2006, provides a framework for action to develop a modern, high quality mental health services for a seven to ten year period. The Government has accepted the Report as the basis for the future development of our mental health services.

An independent Monitoring Group was established in March 2006, to monitor and assess progress by the Health Service Executive, government departments and other agencies in implementing the recommendations set out in the Report. The Monitoring Group’s first annual report was published in May 2007. Implementation of the individual recommendations of “*A Vision for Change*”, is a matter primarily for the HSE. In July 2006, the HSE established an implementation group to ensure that mental health services develop in a synchronised and consistent manner across the country. The HSE intend to publish an implementation plan shortly which is to include a timed and prioritised set of short, medium and longer term goals.

Departmental Agencies.

180. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health and Children the annual operating budget of HIQA; the proposed operating budget for 2008; the number of staff engaged in its oper-

ation at present; and if plans exist to increase the staff complement in 2008. [28415/07]

205. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the budget and number of staff for the interim HIQA for each year from 2004 to 2006; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28654/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 180 and 205 together.

The interim Health Information and Quality Authority (iHIQA) was set up in March 2005. The Health Act 2007, which was signed into law on 21 April 2007, provided for the establishment of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), incorporating the Irish Health Service Accreditation Board and the Office of the Chief Inspector of Social Services. HIQA was formally established on 15 May 2007.

The operational budget for HIQA for 2007 is €9.667m for current expenditure. The budget for 2008 has not been determined by the Department, but will be decided as soon as possible. The number of staff in position at present is 58, which are comprised of seconded, agency and permanent staff. The number of people that the Authority will employ in 2008 will depend on their budget for next year.

The operational budget for interim HIQA for 2005 was €1.7m and €3.5m for 2006. The interim Authority consisted of a non-executive Board and 2 staff that were seconded from the Department of Health and Children in November 2005. The number of staff increased to three in August 2006 when the Chief Executive took up position. There were also three agency staff working with the Authority by the end of 2006.

Cancer Screening Programme.

181. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health and Children the cost of sending smear tests to a company (details supplied). [28416/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular question raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy in relation to the matter raised.

182. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health and Children if there are plans to send breast biopsies to a company (details supplied) or other foreign laboratory at the present time. [28417/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular question raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy in relation to the matter raised.

Ambulance Service.

183. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding the provision of a new ambulance centre (details supplied) in County Mayo; the stage this project is at; when it will go for tender; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28434/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Question No. 184 answered with Question No. 170.

Question No. 185 answered with Question No. 169.

Medical Cards.

186. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the estimated cost per year of allowing a person returning to the labour market, where eligible, to keep their medical card for five years instead of three. [28499/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Based on a recent medical card costing exercise undertaken by my Department, on foot of a Parliamentary Question, it is estimated that the annual cost of providing a medical card to a person aged between 18 and 65 years is approximately €1,200 per annum. Accordingly, the estimated additional cost of allowing a person with full eligibility and returning to the labour market to keep their medical card for five years instead of three is approximately €2,400.

This figure does not take account of the following:

- Potential additional cost in terms of income forgone by public hospitals in respect of A&E attendance and in-patient charges;
- The possible cost, depending on the circumstances of a person retaining a medical card, of such benefits as aids and appliances;
- Costs in other areas of Government in which the holding of a medical card may be used as a means of determining entitlement to services or benefits.

Health Services.

187. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Health and Children if home care packages and nursing home packages are available to patients that can be discharged from the National Rehabilitation Hospital, Dún Laoghaire in order that beds are made available for those who are on waiting lists for the National Rehabilitation Hospital; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28500/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Adoption Services.

188. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health and Children the proposed age limit for adoption in the legislation currently being prepared; if current declarations of eligibility and suitability stand if prospective parents have reached the limit when the adoption process is complete; if she will ensure no current application falls foul of new age limits not in force when the application was made; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28508/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Brendan Smith): My Department is currently working closely with the Parliamentary Draftsman's Office on the drafting of the Adoption Bill, which is a priority within the Government's legislative programme. The issue of an age limit is under consideration and has been discussed as part of a wide consultation process which is informing the drafting process. The Bill will have regard to transitional issues which will arise for applicants who have commenced but not completed the adoption process on the enactment of the legislation.

189. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the impending adoption legislation will include a ban on single parent adoptions in view of the fact that the Adoption Board is requiring that sole applicants apply directly to the board providing an affidavit as to the way they meet the five criteria under the inter-country adoption framework before an assessment by the Health Service Executive can be conducted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28509/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Brendan Smith): The legislation governing eligibility to adopt is set out in Section 10 of the Adoption Act 1991. The Adoption Board have introduced guidelines to ensure consistency of approach in determining whether it is satisfied that the particular circumstances of a case meet the requirements of Section 10 (2) so that a sole applicant is eligible to adopt a child. The guidelines provide for a two phase application process in which:

- the applicant sends an affidavit of their ‘particular circumstances’ to the Adoption Board to determine if they are eligible;
- only when the sole applicant is deemed eligible by the Adoption Board does the application proceed to the home study and assessment stage — this is a separate and discrete part of the adoption assessment process where suitability is assessed against the five standards as provided for in the Framework for Inter-country Adoption Assessment Procedure. Single applicants deemed eligible are assessed against these standards in the normal way.

There are no proposals at present to introduce a ban on “single parent” adoptions in the legislation currently being drafted.

Health Repayment Scheme.

190. **Deputy Bernard Allen** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will direct the health repayment scheme administrator to in future sign all letters personally and not sign with a scribble with no typed name at the end of the letter as for example in a letter dated 25 October 2007 to this Deputy regarding a constituent. [28515/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Health Service Executive (HSE) has responsibility for administering the health repayment scheme in conjunction with the appointed scheme administrator KPMG/McCann Fitzgerald. The HSE have informed my Department that the Scheme Administrator is a statutory function set up under the Health (Repayment) Scheme Act 2006 and letters are written from the Scheme Administrator and not from any individual. My Department has asked

the HSE to discuss this issue with the Scheme Administrator to establish if more specific contact details can be supplied.

Question No. 191 answered with Question No. 137.

Hospital Staff.

192. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health and Children the starting date of a new breast surgeon for the Letterkenny area; if the surgeon will be located in Letterkenny or in Galway; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28539/07]

193. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health and Children if there are plans to introduce a colorectal surgeon for Letterkenny General Hospital; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28540/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 192 and 193 together.

Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular questions raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy in relation to the matters raised.

Cancer Screening Programme.

194. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health and Children the exact date when the BreastCheck service will be available to the women of Donegal; and the frequency with which this service will be available to the people of Donegal. [28541/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): BreastCheck commenced the screening process in the Western region in October. I have allocated additional revenue funding of €8 million to the National Cancer Screening Service for this year to meet the additional costs involved in national roll-out. The full complement of 111 staff for roll-out has been approved. I have also made available an additional €26.7m capital funding for the construction of two new clinical units and the provision of seven additional mobile units and state of the art digital equipment.

The expansion of the BreastCheck programme to the Western region covers counties Donegal, Clare, Galway, Sligo, Roscommon, Mayo, Leitrim, and Tipperary North Riding. The screening sequence for roll out to individual counties will be dictated by BreastCheck’s operational

considerations such as maximising uptake, most efficient use of mobile and static units and radiographic personnel. The Programme is designed to offer repeat screening within an interval of 21-27 months.

Departmental Agencies.

195. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if there are procedures in place to deal with situations whereby Health Service Executive staff mislead or misinform a meeting of the various regional health fora. [28577/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I understand that the Deputy is referring to disciplinary procedures which the Health Service Executive have in place if a complaint is made in relation to a member of staff. I am aware that the HSE has produced a comprehensive document on the matter entitled “Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures for the Health Service”. This document was produced by a joint union/management working group under the auspices of the HSE — Employers Agency. The procedures were prepared in accordance with the Labour Relations Commission’s Code of Practice on Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures and came into effect from 1st May 2004.

As disciplinary procedures regarding HSE staff are a matter for the Executive, my Department has requested the HSE to investigate the matter raised by the Deputy further and to reply to him directly.

Vaccination Programme.

196. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason the national immunisation programme tuberculosis vaccinations in secondary schools as advised by the 2002 National Immunisation Guidelines for Ireland has never been implemented in the former ERHA region and is five years overdue. [28592/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Deputy’s question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Services Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Medical Cards.

197. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reasons persons with medical cards are being refused dentures and similar dental treatment; if her Department has completed a review of the medical card dental

scheme; when Dáil Éireann will see this review of the scheme; and when the service will return to its expected level. [28629/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) provides for a range of dental services for adult medical card holders from participating dentists holding contracts with the Health Service Executive (HSE). The DTSS Review Group was established in May 2006 to undertake a comprehensive review of Primary Care Oral Health Services provided under the DTSS. Represented on the Review Group are the HSE, the Health Service Employers Agency, the Department of Health and Children, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Department of Finance and the Irish Dental Association (IDA). The Group is chaired by Mr Finbar Flood. Also, the development of a National Oral Health Policy, which was recently announced by me, will include in its work the possibility of streamlining the existing state-funded dental schemes.

Since the Group was established, a legal issue has arisen with regard to the Competition Act 2002 as it relates to the negotiation of professional fees. The issues involved are complex and my officials are working with the Attorney General’s office to clarify the way forward. The existing contractual arrangements with private dental practitioners under the DTSS for provision of dental services to eligible patients remain in place although I am aware that some dentists have indicated that they wish to resign from this scheme. It should be noted that dentists withdrawing from the scheme are obliged to work a three months notice period. If an eligible patient cannot access the services of a dentist because the dentist has resigned from the DTSS, that patient may approach any dentist within the Scheme for treatment.

Question No. 198 answered with Question No. 137.

199. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Health and Children her Department’s procedure for procurement of drugs for the medical card scheme; if her Department negotiates directly for these drugs, or if it uses six European countries as a standard for this purpose; and if her Department uses the six EU countries, which six countries are used for that function. [28631/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004 and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. The Executive is also responsible for the negotiation of the supply of drugs and medicines for the GMS and community drugs schemes. Therefore, the Executive is the appro-

[Deputy Mary Harney.]

appropriate body to consider the issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Services.

200. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position in relation to a person (details supplied) in County Clare who is waiting to have tests for MS carried out by a consultant neurologist at the Galway University Hospital; if this procedure will be dealt with as a matter of urgency; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28637/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular case raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this case investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Proposed Legislation.

201. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans for the publication and enactment of the Pharmacy No. 2 Bill; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28649/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As the Deputy is aware, the first Pharmacy Act was passed by the Oireachtas on 5th April this year and will be commenced in 3 stages. Stage 1 of the Pharmacy Act implementation process has been completed and the Council of the new PSI has been established. The Society's Council has been working on reviewing current procedures, and on the preparation of new procedures to allow the commencement of those sections of the Act included in Stage 2 of the process. Stage 2 will deal with the new procedures which will apply to the registration of pharmacists and pharmacy businesses. Stage 3 will deal with the Complaints, Inquiries and Discipline (Fitness to Practice Provisions) regime.

The second Pharmacy Bill will follow on from the enactment of the 3 Stages of Pharmacy Act 2007 and will deal with other changes in the regulatory framework for pharmacy and pharmacy services, not addressed in the 2007 Act, and remaining recommendations of the Pharmacy Review Group. Preparation of a framework for, and the publication of, the second Bill, is depen-

dent on the progress of the enactment of the first Pharmacy Act.

Services for People with Disabilities.

202. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on correspondence (details supplied); if her Department has a policy in place to deal with the provision of nursing supports to children with severe intellectual disability and associated medical problems attending a new integrated primary school; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28650/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Jimmy Devins): My Department's policy is to ensure that all persons receive proper health care in line with best practices and having regard to the availability of resources. The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Cancer Screening Programme.

203. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the budget for the year 2005 and the number of staff for 2005 for the National Breast Screening Programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28652/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The National Cancer Screening Service has confirmed to my Department that the Budget for 2005 for BreastCheck, the National Breast Screening Programme, was €10.6 million. The number of staff employed by BreastCheck in 2005 was 109.

Departmental Agencies.

204. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the budget and number of staff for the National Rehabilitation Board for each year from 1997 to 1999; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28653/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Jimmy Devins): The details requested by the Deputy are not readily available. I have arranged to have the information forwarded directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Question No. 205 answered with Question No. 180.

Health Services.

206. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Mini-

ster for Health and Children the steps she is taking to direct the Health Service Executive to resolve the ongoing dispute with dentists which is having a direct impact on medical card patients; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28661/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) provides for a range of dental services for adult medical card holders from participating dentists holding contracts with the Health Service Executive (HSE). Since the establishment of a DTSS Review group in May, 2006, a legal issue has arisen with regard to the Competition Act 2002 as it relates to the negotiation of professional fees for dentists. The issues involved are complex and my officials are working with the Attorney General's office to clarify the way forward.

The existing contractual arrangements with private dental practitioners under the DTSS for provision of dental services to eligible patients remain in place, although I am aware that some dentists have indicated that they wish to resign from this scheme. It should be noted that dentists withdrawing from the scheme are obliged to work a three months notice period. If an eligible patient cannot access the services of a dentist because the dentist has resigned from the DTSS, that patient may approach any dentist within the scheme for treatment.

Departmental Correspondence.

207. **Deputy Peter Power** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has personally made contact with a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary regarding their concerns; if she has been provided with a full explanation as to the reason the individual was not directly contacted by the relevant individuals; if the other individuals affected were contacted directly; when does she expect a detailed response for the person; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28716/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): My Office received an email from the person referred to by the Deputy on 6 November last. I am having the issues which were raised in that email examined and will reply to the person as soon as possible.

Health Service Executive.

208. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of members on the board of the Health Service Executive; the attendance rate of each board member at meetings of the HSE; the fees paid to each board member; the expenses that have been paid to each board member; the amount of times the board of the HSE meets; the persons who have

retired from the board and the persons who have replaced them; the criteria used to determine who retired and any other relevant information; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28723/07]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Board of the Health Service Executive is made up of eleven members comprising a Chair and ten ordinary members. Issues relating to the terms of office of members of the Board are detailed in schedule 2 of the Health Act 2004 while Section 14 of the Act deals with the removal of members from office. To date, nobody has either retired, or been removed, from the Board of the Executive.

Fees paid to members of the Board of the Executive are determined in accordance with Department of Finance guidelines which link such payments to the remuneration package of the Chief Executive Officer of the organisation. In the case of the Health Service Executive, this places the Board in category 1 for such purposes. The rates payable to board members of category 1 agencies are €35,000 per annum for Chairs and €17,500 per annum in respect of ordinary board members.

My Department does not routinely collect information relating to the meeting attendance rates of Board members, expenses paid to Board members or the frequency of Board meetings and has, therefore, requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have these matters examined and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Coast Guard.

209. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Transport the rationale behind the proposed closures of the Valentia coast guard station and Malin Head coast guard radio station, Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28607/07]

210. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Transport if he has carried out financial, safety and operational assessments on the proposed transfer of the Valentia coast guard station and Malin Head coast guard radio station to another location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28608/07]

211. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Transport if the opinions of local services such as lifeboats, fishing community and other users in the maritime community, that is, the Naval Service, coast guard, customs, rescue services, gardaí, fisheries officers, drug enforcement officers and other interested parties, have been sought in relation to the proposals for the future use of Valentia coast guard station and Malin Head coast guard station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28609/07]

212. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Transport the way the proposed move of the Valentia coast guard station and the Malin Head coast guard station can be financially, operationally or functionally more effective than the existing arrangements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28610/07]

213. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Transport the way the decades of experience of the current staff of the Valentia and Malin Head coast guard stations can be replaced by new staff in a new location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28611/07]

214. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Transport if he will confirm that suitable experienced staff can be recruited for the proposed new locations for the Valentia and Malin Head coast guard stations; the reasons for the choice of the new locations and the benefits that these locations have over the existing locations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28612/07]

215. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Transport if he will confirm that the new locations for the Valentia and Malin Head coast guard stations have interested technical capacity to carry out the existing functions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28613/07]

216. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Transport if he has consulted with the relevant international bodies involved in search, rescue, drug and crime prevention and fisheries protection, in relation to the proposed relocation of the Valentia and Malin Head coast guard stations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28614/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 209 to 216, inclusive, together.

I think it is important to put the relevant decisions in context and to assure the Deputy that these decisions have been taken against a background of increased focus on, and support for, the maritime safety sector. It is my intention that the Irish Coast Guard and Maritime Administration will be strengthened on an ongoing basis over the coming years. My ambition is to put in place a service which will meet the needs of this country well in the 21st century.

The communications system is the backbone infrastructure on which Coast Guard operations depend. It is essential that it is of high quality, efficient, effective and that it provides value for money. I am concerned at the state of the present equipment and have confirmed that a €2 million investment in essential equipment should proceed without any further delay. I have also confirmed that this equipment should be sufficient to

operate two fully manned Co-Ordination centres. Each centre will have the capability to run the entire Coast Guard network which will allow for a seamless transfer of co-ordination should one centre become suddenly unworkable for any reason. I have also confirmed that locating one on the east coast and one on the west coast is the preferred option and that the east coast centre should be co-located with the HQ. These decisions were made against the background of a study completed by Deloitte and Touche in 2002.

In relation to the west coast I consider that the site should provide a technically robust location and also be situated where all the staff at the centre can live within close proximity to enable them to be called on in an emergency. I have not decided where that location should be.

I purposely outlined the long-term scenario on this basis to provide a framework for negotiations, which are now taking place, on how best to implement this particular step in the modernisation of the Irish Coast Guard. I have given direction to the tendering process so that it can proceed, and given enough notice to enable difficulties to be identified and resolved before equipment has to be installed. I have made it clear that these discussions, which are underway, must take account of the safety needs of local communities, and ongoing improvement of the service to the public, and the concerns of individual staff members.

In relation to staff, I also want to restate my deeply held appreciation of the work done by those working in these centres today. I do not want to, nor do I intend to lose the emergency management expertise that has been developed and indeed I am determined to ensure that it is retained for future generations. At an individual level, no one will lose their job in this process. Nor will they be forced to move to new locations. This presents challenges, as it does in the decentralisation programme, but they are challenges that are being discussed with the staff involved and that will be overcome in consultation with them.

The issue was discussed at a meeting of the Marine Emergency Advisory Group, which is a strategic high level advisory group, and will be discussed further with representatives of national and neighbouring marine search and rescue stakeholders in the Irish Marine Search and Rescue Committee next month. I note the point made by the Deputy in relation to consultation with other local services who might have an interest in using the Coast Guard locations in the future and will explore this particular aspect. However, neither location has ready access to the sea and this may be a limiting factor.

The Irish Coast Guard has no responsibility for drug and crime prevention and fisheries protection, at present. In relation to international bodies providing similar services, while it is technically feasible to operate these services from

outside the country, my preference is for both locations to be on this island. It would be my intention that where we can provide support to others internationally we should be in a position to do so and indeed I consider that this is likely to be an increasingly important role for Ireland in the future.

Rail Network.

217. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Transport the position regarding discussions with CIÉ on the use of the old Broadstone rail line and specifically if a decision has been made on whether it will be used for a Luas line or for suburban rail services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28044/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Transport 21 provides for the development of a Luas line from St Stephen's Green to Liffey Junction, using the old Broadstone railway alignment. This is consistent with the long-term transportation strategy for the Greater Dublin Area in the "Dublin Transportation Initiative" (1995) and in the Dublin Transportation Office's strategy "A Platform for Change" (2001), both of which envisaged the old Broadstone alignment being used for Luas or Metro Services.

Iarnród Éireann recently submitted a proposal to my Department in relation to an alternative use of the Broadstone alignment for suburban rail services. My Department has engaged transport consultants Booz, Allen and Hamilton to review this proposal.

I remain committed to the strategy set out in Transport 21 for the use of the old Broadstone alignment, unless the independent consultants confirm there are very strong strategic, transport and operational arguments which require consideration of an alternative use.

Transport 21.

218. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Transport the amount of money that has been spent on Transport 21; the key outstanding infrastructural projects still to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28045/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): From January 2006 to October 2007, total Exchequer expenditure on Transport 21 projects was €3,476.4 million. Transport 21 is a ten-year financial framework that identifies a number of key transport projects to be completed in each of the years from 2006 to 2015. Significant progress has been made in all of the sectors covered by the framework and all of the implementing agencies are now geared up to deliver on the programme.

All of the major projects included in Transport 21 are being progressed and are at various stages

of the planning and implementation process. A number of projects have already been completed, others are at various stages of construction, some have begun the statutory planning process while many more are at design, planning and public consultation stage.

Rail Network.

219. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Transport the position regarding the Dublin interconnector project; the anticipated capital cost for the project; the expected completion date; the state of discussions with all stakeholders in relation to this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28047/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The planning, design and construction of the Interconnector is a matter for Iarnród Éireann. Transport 21 provides for the completion of the Interconnector by 2015. I understand that the feasibility and planning design studies currently being undertaken by Iarnród Éireann and its consultants are due for completion shortly. As part of this work Iarnród Éireann undertook public consultation in relation to the project on 3rd and 4th July this year. Iarnród Éireann is also liaising with the RPA over matters relating to the key interchanges between the Interconnector and Luas and Metro and with Dublin City Council regarding traffic management matters during the building programme.

I do not consider it prudent to release commercially sensitive information in relation to the cost of individual projects within Transport 21 until the public procurement processes are complete.

Railway Stations.

220. **Deputy Michael Kennedy** asked the Minister for Transport the future plans for disabled access at Donabate rail station in view of its inadequate disabled facilities; if he will enter into discussions with Iarnród Éireann on the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28066/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The day to day operation of and the upgrading of railway stations is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and is not one in which I have any role.

Rail Services.

221. **Deputy Michael Kennedy** asked the Minister for Transport the position regarding the delivery of 183 railcars announced in early 2007; the number of trains that have been rolled out and onto which services; if any are to be allocated for services along the DART line or north Dublin commuter trains; if plans exist in relation to the

[Deputy Michael Kennedy.]

delivery of more trains for north Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28067/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The current position regarding the delivery of the 183 new intercity railcars is that Iarnród Éireann has taken delivery of 60 of the cars. They are currently undergoing commissioning and the first batch will be introduced into service on the Dublin-Sligo route over the coming months. The remainder of the new fleet will be delivered and brought into service by the Spring of 2009. None of these railcars will be used on DART or North Dublin commuter services but commuter trains currently deployed on the Sligo line will, I understand, when replaced by the new railcars, be used on Dublin commuter services. I understand that Iarnród Éireann are considering the purchase of additional rolling stock for Dublin commuter services in the context of the electrification of the Maynooth and Northern lines.

Harbours and Piers.

222. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Transport if there are proposals for the Inch Island pier; his views on incorporating the Inch Island document into the inland fisheries review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28103/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I have no responsibilities with regard to Inch Island Pier or the inland fisheries review.

National Car Tests.

223. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport if his attention has been drawn to the problem persons (details supplied) have been encountering in trying to have a converted fire engine pass a national car test to allow them to operate it as a limousine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28114/07]

224. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport the action that has been taken to deal with the questions raised in the file given to him in July 2007 and again sent to his office in August 2007 regarding the problems persons (details supplied) have been experiencing in trying to have a converted fire engine pass a national car test to allow them to operate it as a limousine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28115/07]

225. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport if, as a result of an anomaly highlighted during the efforts by persons (details supplied) to have a converted fire engine pass a national car test to allow them to operate it as a limousine, those in charge of operating the

NCT system have taken a decision not to pass out any vehicle over 3.5 tonne thus jeopardising the limousine industry and over 1,000 jobs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28116/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 223 to 225, inclusive, together.

Under the Road Safety Authority Act 2006 (Conferral of Functions) Order 2006 (SI No.477 of 2006), the national car testing service, including in relation to Small Public Service Vehicles (SPSVs) and weight thresholds for vehicle testing purposes, is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. Responsibility for the overall regulatory framework governing the licensing of SPSVs lies with the Commission for Taxi Regulation.

Rail Services.

226. **Deputy Áine Brady** asked the Minister for Transport the progress to date on the Kildare route project, in particular for users of the Hazelhatch and Sallins stations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28119/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I am informed by Iarnród Éireann that it expects the Kildare Route upgrade project, on which work is currently underway, to be completed by 2010 and the additional services serving, inter alia, Sallins and Hazelhatch, to be operational from this date.

227. **Deputy Áine Brady** asked the Minister for Transport the plans in place to improve the level of service for Kilcock rail commuters including frequency of trains and car parking at the station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28134/07]

228. **Deputy Áine Brady** asked the Minister for Transport the plans in place to improve the frequency and capacity of the Maynooth line including the delivery of new rail cars; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28135/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I propose to answer Questions Nos. 227 and 228 together.

The capacity and frequency of services on the Maynooth line have been substantially increased in recent years due to the doubling of the track and the provision of additional rolling stock. The opening of the Docklands station has also benefitted passengers on the line with additional services from Clonsilla to Docklands. Services will be further improved when the remaining peak period services operating with 4 carriages on the Dublin-Maynooth line are extended to 8 carriages during 2008. This will be made possible by the re-allocation of commuter railcars currently in use on the Sligo line. New intercity rail-

cars are being introduced over the coming months on the Sligo line.

I understand from Irish Rail that it is currently reviewing its plans for re-signalling in the city centre area as part of its broader plans for the upgrade of railway infrastructure in the Dublin area. In this context, it is considering the removal of level crossings and re-signalling the Maynooth line as a means of substantially increasing capacity on the line. The project is expected to be completed in 2011. The management and development of car parks is a matter for Irish Rail.

Ministerial Staff.

229. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by his Department on 1 November 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28159/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The tables attached provide the information required by the Deputy.

Name	Title	Salary Scale (@ 2002 rates)
Frank Lahiffe	Senior Special Advisor to the Minister	€63,566 – €73,914 (per annum)
Tom Rowley	Press Officer to the Minister	€68,409 – €79,293
Mary Browne	Personal Secretary to the Minister	€334.79 – €622.37 (per week) plus 10% attraction allowance
Bobby Holland	Personal Assistant to the Minister	€34,733 – €40,999

Name	Title	Salary Scale (@ 2002 rates)
Nicki Flanagan	Personal Secretary to Minister of State	€334.79 – €622.37 (per week)
Niamh Stephenson	Personal Assistant to the Minister	€34,733 – €40,999
Bernard McGuinness	Civilian Driver for the Minister of State	€502.94 (per week)
Seamus O'Donnell	Civilian Driver for the Minister of State	€502.94 (per week)

230. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by him; and if

he will make a statement on the matter. [28174/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The attached tables provide the information required by the Deputy.

Private Office

Name	Title	Annual Salary
Tanya Harrington	Specialist in Transport Policy	€82,016 – €95,363

Press Office

Name	Title	Annual Salary
Olive Stephens	Press Advisor	€82,016 – €95,363

Constituency Office

Name	Title	Annual Salary
James Fegan	Special Advisor	€88,261 – €102,305
Margaret Conway	Personal Secretary	€44,314 – €52,379
Una Grehan	Personal Assistant	€422.85 – €786.10 per week

Road Safety.

231. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Transport if there are plans to introduce legis-

lation in order that all cars using roads here meet the minimum standards as set out by the national car test and that cars not meeting these standards could be impounded by the relevant authorities;

[Deputy Paul Gogarty.]

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28191/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Legislation is already in place in relation to the roadworthiness standards of vehicles generally and the vehicles which are liable to the National Car Test. Contravention of the legislation is punishable by fines and/or imprisonment. Enforcement of road traffic law, including vehicle standards regulations, is a matter for the Garda Síochána who have wide powers to deal with defective vehicles including taking such vehicles off the road.

Road Network.

232. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport if his Department has guidelines on specifications in relation to work under the local improvements scheme (details supplied); and if so, if such specifications will be made available. [28200/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The administration of the Local Improvements Scheme, including the standard of work to be undertaken, is a matter for the relevant county council, subject to the terms of the Local Improvements Scheme Memorandum and relevant Department circulars. The Memorandum states, inter alia, that works undertaken under the Local Improvements Scheme should aim to provide a soundly constructed and well drained road which is capable of being easily maintained by the users and that the quality of the work should be such as to last for several years. It also states that the width, bearing capacity and standard of finished surface should be related to the needs of the users, with particular regard to the type of farm machinery using the road and the extent of tractor and lorry traffic.

Any question regarding the quality of work undertaken under the scheme on individual projects is a matter between the relevant county council and the landowners concerned.

Light Rail Network.

233. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Transport if the Luas BX line to Liffey Junction will be completed by 2012; if the line will be constructed in a single phase from Stephen's Green to Liffey Junction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28203/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Transport 21 provides for the development of a Luas line from St Stephen's Green to Liffey Junction, using the old Broadstone railway alignment. The Board of the RPA decided earlier this year on a preferred route option for the cross-city on-street element of this Luas line and the RPA are now planning detailed

design work on the project based on this option. Dublin City Council is undertaking traffic modelling work as part of its examination of revised traffic management arrangements in the city, which will be required not only for the delivery of the cross-city Luas line but also Metro North. In this context, the RPA is also considering ways of streamlining and combining works on the cross-city Luas Line and the construction of Metro North in order to minimise disruption to the City Centre.

Following completion of design work, consideration of combining work on both projects, and subject to a satisfactory outcome to the city centre traffic management planning work, the RPA will submit a Railway Order application to An Bord Pleanála. The construction timescale will be dependent on the outcome of this statutory approval process.

Rail Network.

234. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Transport when the Mullingar to Athlone rail line will be re-opened following the recommendations of the Iarnród Éireann report; the position regarding funding for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28280/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I refer the Deputy to my answer to Question No. 531 of 26 September 2007. The position remains the same.

Air Services.

235. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Transport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Aer Lingus has ceased the practice of allowing pets who have full travel documents to fly on passenger flights as baggage; if his Department has made contact with the company to question the reason for this policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28506/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): This is an operational matter for Aer Lingus and is not the responsibility of my Department. I understand that Aer Lingus' policy in relation to the carriage of pets is set out in full on its website.

Road Traffic Offences.

236. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport the position regarding the application of the penalty points system to persons holding a driving licence from outside of Ireland. [28514/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): All drivers are subject to road traffic law and it is a matter for An Garda Síochána to enforce the law. Under the Road Safety Authority Act 2006 (Conferral of Functions) Order

2006 (S.I. No. 477 of 2006) the Road Safety Authority has responsibility for ensuring that penalty points are endorsed on a licence record. Data in relation to penalty points is held on the National Driver File. As foreign licence holders do not have an Irish driving licence record, penalty points incurred in this State are recorded against that person on a separate record in the National Driver File.

I am conscious that enforcing penalties for road traffic offences on foreign registered drivers raises many legal, organisational and procedural issues, which make it very difficult for any one State to enforce such penalties. For that reason, my Department is pursuing this question at the European, British/Irish and North/South levels where mutual recognition and cross border enforcement possibilities are under consideration.

Departmental Programmes.

237. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Transport the amount the Transport 21 report cost the taxpayer; the position he is at regarding Transport 21; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28518/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The Transport 21 2006 Annual Progress Report was prepared by Departmental officials. Printing and translation costs were €12,787. The first issue of a Transport 21 Newsletter was recently published. The printing cost was €1,795. Significant progress has been made to date on Transport 21. Major projects, particularly on the national road network, are being brought in on time and on budget.

All of the seven national road projects opened to date this year have been on time, including the Newry- Dundalk motorway which opened three months ahead of schedule, the Tyrellspass to Kilbeggan project which was six months ahead of schedule, and phase 1 of the Arklow- Gorey Bypass which opened 4 months ahead of schedule. The inter-urban motorway programme is on target to be completed by the end of 2010 and the final section of the M1 Dublin-Border motorway opened recently.

There has also been considerable progress in public transport sector. Construction has begun on a number of important rail projects, including the first phase of the Western Rail Corridor and the Kildare route upgrade. Two Luas projects also started — the extension to Cherrywood and Docklands. The Docklands station in Dublin opened last March two years ahead of target. New rolling stock is being introduced on the railways. The benefits of this can be seen in the hourly service introduced on the Dublin-Cork route at the start of the year and will be seen on other intercity routes as the new railcars enter service. Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann are putting additional buses into service, improving the level

of service. Pier D in Dublin Airport opened earlier this week on time and within budget — the cost was 20% less than the cost of comparable international facilities.

Consultancy Contracts.

238. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Transport the cost involved in compiling the Deloitte and Touche report on coast guard stations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28519/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The Deloitte & Touche Irish Coast Guard Study, which reported in 2002 and made recommendations for the future development of the service having regard to international best practice and value for money cost approximately €145,000.

Rail Network.

239. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Transport the proposals made by Iarnród Éireann, Galway County Council and Galway City Council towards the delivery of a double rail tracking system between Galway and Athenry; if his attention has been drawn to the urgent need to dramatically increase rail travel particularly for workers going to and from Galway city; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28568/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Transport 21 does not include the double tracking of the railway line between Athenry and Galway. I understand, however, that Galway City Council is considering seeking funding for such a project as part of its bid for funding for Galway under the Gateway Innovation Fund under the NDP.

Strategic Management Initiative.

240. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport if, in accordance with the principles of better regulation, it is his Department's practice to monitor and collate data on the implementation, enforcement and effectiveness of legislation which falls within his Department's remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28572/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The legislation under my Department's remit is kept under review and proposals for its amendment, repeal, and / or consolidation is considered from time to time in the light of experience of its effectiveness in meeting the purpose of the legislation.

Services for People with Disabilities.

241. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Transport if negotiations have taken place

[Deputy Michael Ring.]

regarding a patient transport service through the rural transport initiative, in conjunction with other Departments. [26409/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I would refer the Deputy to my response to Written PQ No. 299 of 9 October 2007. The current position is that HSE and Pobal will now be meeting my Department later this month to report on the potential for closer co-operation between rural transport groups and the HSE. I await the outcome of that meeting.

Taxi Regulations.

242. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Transport the person who is responsible for the issuing of taxi plates to applicants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28618/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The Commission for Taxi Regulation is responsible for the granting of small public service vehicle licences in respect of taxis, wheelchair accessible taxis, hackneys and limousines under the Taxi Regulation Act 2003. The issuing of these licences is administered by the National Car Testing Service Limited (NCTS) on behalf of the Commission.

Industrial Development.

243. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Transport when he will make available the €53 million to implement the recommendations of the Shannon International Airport in Open Skies Mid West Tourism and Economic Development Plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28638/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): My Department has prepared an Economic and Tourism Development Plan for the Shannon Airport catchment area. The Plan has been prepared in consultation with the Department of Finance, the Department of Arts, Sport & Tourism, the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and will be finalised in the context of the forthcoming Budget. The purpose of the plan is to ensure that the region is well placed to respond to the challenges and opportunities emerging in the context of full liberalisation of the transatlantic aviation market and the phasing out of the Shannon Stop as envisaged under the EU-US Open Skies Agreement.

Air Services.

244. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Transport the progress the Shannon Airport Authority and Dublin Airport Authority have made to ensure the establishment of a full US customs and border protection inspection post at

Shannon Airport in 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28639/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): For some time my Department has been in informal discussions with the U.S. authorities on the introduction of full pre-clearance facilities for U.S. bound passengers at Dublin and Shannon Airports. Currently my officials are in contact with a number of other Departments on certain aspects of these discussions. When introduced, the operation of these facilities would be subject to an Inter-Governmental treaty to be concluded between the two countries. At this stage, prior to receiving the formal U.S. proposals for this agreement, I am not in a position to be definitive about the date when the facilities can be introduced.

Ministerial Appointments.

245. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Transport when he will appoint the two directors of the Aer Lingus board which he has failed to appoint to date; if he will give the new appointees a clear goal to restore connectivity between Shannon Airport and London Heathrow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28640/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The State is entitled under the Memorandum and Articles of Association to appoint three directors to the board of Aer Lingus. Currently there is one State appointed director serving on the board and it is now proposed that two further appointments will be made in the near future.

The State's appointees will seek to ensure that all future decisions of the Company, which have significant implications for wider government, aviation or regional development policies, are considered at board level. This will give the State appointees the opportunity to raise the public policy implications of each decision and to ensure that the full commercial implications for the company are taken into account. The State appointees to the board do not have a veto on board decisions. It is not possible for the State to avail of its shareholding to seek to impose non-commercial obligations on the Company.

Public Transport.

246. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport the reason passenger transport operators were not notified of the changes due to take place regarding the removal of the rebate of excise duty on fuel used in passenger transport services; if his attention has been drawn to the financial difficulty this has caused when contracts and costings have already been agreed for 2008; if he has had discussions with the Department of Finance in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28672/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The current fuel duty rebate scheme for passenger bus transport services is a matter for the Minister for Finance and the Revenue Commissioners. I understand that in March of this year the European Commission published its decision to refuse all requests for the retention of the fuel duty rebate scheme. Officials from my Department are currently engaging with officials from the Department of Finance to explore the possibility of replacing the scheme, if appropriate, by alternative non-tax financial support mechanisms to achieve the same policy objectives, subject to EU State Aid requirements.

Rail Network.

247. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Transport the measures Irish Rail is taking to upgrade the bridge over the river Shannon on the Sligo/Dublin line to improve safety and journey time. [28673/07]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I am informed by Iarnród Éireann that during 2008 it will be undertaking a major renewal project on the Shannon river bridge at Drumsna, Co Leitrim on the Dublin to Sligo line. The project will be funded under the Railway Safety Programme as part of Transport 21. On completion of the scheme by the end of 2008, trains will be able to pass over the renewed bridge at the line speed of 75 mph.

Northern Ireland Issues.

248. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the reason a person (details supplied) has been unable to get justice due to a speech impediment in a case that has dated back to the 1970s in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28079/07]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Dermot Ahern): This seems essentially to be a private law matter. It would be for the person concerned, therefore, to seek legal advice on what options

may be open to them at this time. On the question of dissatisfaction with a financial institution, again, the person referred to may wish to seek independent advice. I note that the institution referred to is regulated by the British Financial Services Authority. The person referred to may wish to make contact with the British Financial Ombudsman Service, the independent body charged with settling disputes between businesses providing financial services and their customers.

249. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if he will request the Northern authorities to take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of a person (details supplied) serving a sentence in a Northern Ireland prison and that they might be transferred to McGilligan Prison as requested by their parents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28123/07]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Dermot Ahern): My Department has been monitoring the case of the person in question and has requested that the appropriate Northern Ireland authorities ensure the safety and welfare of the individual concerned. The Department will also ask that any request for a prison transfer be considered sympathetically.

Ministerial Staff.

250. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by his Department on 1 November 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28154/07]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The tables set out the names, positions and remuneration of the then Ministers' Private Office staff who were employed by the Department of Foreign Affairs on 1 November 2002. All staff were contracted under terms and conditions of employment set by the Minister for Finance and were employed on a full-time basis.

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Brian Cowen T.D.

Name	Position	Remuneration
Mr. Gerry Steadman	Special Adviser	Assistant Principal Officer standard scale (plus 10% attraction allowance) €52,982 – €66,063
Ms. Sinead Dooley	Personal Secretary	Executive Officer higher scale €23,011 – €37,606

Minister of State, Mr Tom Kitt T.D.

Name	Position	Remuneration
Mr. John Lahart	Personal Assistant	Higher Executive Officer standard scale – PPC €36,560 – €43,156
Ms. Tracey Young	Personal Secretary	Secretarial Assistant scale €17,453 – €33,692
Mr. John Hunt	Civilian Driver	€26,243
Mr. George Sweeney	Civilian Driver	€26,243

[Deputy Dermot Ahern.]

Minister of State, Mr Dick Roche T.D.

Name	Position	Remuneration
Mr. Frank Rickard	Civilian Driver	€26,243
Mr. Lance O'Brien	Civilian Driver	€26,243

251. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28169/07]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The table sets out the names of the staff

Name	Position	Salary Scale
Mr. Ciarán O'Cuinn	Special Adviser (Non-established)	Principal Officer standard scale €82, 016 – €101,446
Mr. Richard Moore	Press Adviser (Non-established)	Principal Officer standard scale €82, 016 – €101,446
Ms. Christine Maguire	Personal Assistant (Non-established)	Higher Executive Officer standard scale €44,314 – €52,379 (excludes long service increments)
Ms. Myra Wall	Personal Secretary (Non- established)	Executive Officer higher scale € 29,093 – €47,980

252. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by

appointed on contract by me, their positions and remuneration. All staff are contracted under terms and conditions of employment set by the Minister for Finance and are employed on a full-time basis. All appointments will terminate no later than the date on which I cease to hold this office.

his Department on 1 November 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28151/07]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Micheál Martin): The breakdown of political appointees who were employed by this Department on 1 November 2002 was as shown in the table.

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Ms Mary Harney

Name	Title	Salary Scale at 1st November 2002
Maurice Roche	Economic Advisor	Deputy Secretary scale – €125,930
John O'Brien	Special Advisor	Assistant Secretary Scale: €92,949 – €106,441
Oliver O'Connor	Special Advisor	Assistant Secretary Scale: €92,949 – €106,441
Catherine Dardis	Personal Assistant	Higher Executive Officer Scale: €33, 886 – €42,934
Nuala Talbot	Personal Secretary	Higher Executive Officer Scale: €33, 886 – €42,934

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Mr Frank Fahey T.D.

Name	Title	Salary at 1st November 2002
Claudia McCarthy	Personal Assistant	Executive Officer Scale: €20,971 – €35,303
Maura Doyle	Personal Secretary	Executive Officer Scale: €20,971 – €35,303
Kevin Fahy	Civilian Driver	€24,709.32
James Cooke	Civilian Driver	€25, 697.61

253. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28166/07]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Micheál Martin): The table sets out details in respect of current staff in my Office appointed by me.

Name	Title	Salary Scale
Christopher Mannion	Special Advisor	Principal Officer scale
Deirdre Gillane	Policy Adviser	Principal Officer scale
Jerry O'Connor	Press Adviser	Principal Officer scale
Elizabeth O'Donoghue	Personal Assistant	Higher Executive Officer scale
Melanie Hewitt	Personal Secretary 0.6% worksharer	Executive Officer scale

Export Licences.

254. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the value of military equipment exported by Irish based companies in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28250/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy John McGuinness): The total value of goods exported under military licence from my Department in each year from 2004 to date are set out in the table. Information on the actual value of military exports was not collected prior to 2004.

Year	Value (€)
2002	Not available
2003	Not available
2004	7,645,979
2005	13,891,995
2006	14,771,306

Proposed Legislation.

255. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if he proposes to regulate counselling bodies such as a centre (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28251/07]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Micheál Martin): All traders, including counselling bodies, are subject to the provisions of consumer protection legislation. In this regard, the recently enacted Consumer Protection Act 2007 includes particular provisions in relation to the manner in which traders deal with consumers in the course of selling goods and services. The Act prohibits traders from engaging in unfair, misleading or aggressive commercial practices.

If the Deputy is aware of any concerns in relation to the commercial practices of particular counselling bodies, I would advise the Deputy to bring these concerns to the attention of the National Consumer Agency, which is responsible for enforcing the unfair commercial practices provisions of the Consumer Protection Act.

Work Permits.

256. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment his views on extending the spousal work permit scheme to cover persons waiting for the outcome of their application for residency based upon marriage to an Irish citizen, particularly in view of reports that some Irish emigrants are refusing to return home as their families cannot afford to live on one income during the approximately 12 months that it will take for the non-EU spouse's residency application to be processed. [28425/07]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Micheál Martin): The Employment Permits Section of my Department informs me that spouses of Irish or EU nationals may apply for an employment permit while awaiting the outcome of their application for residency. The fee is waived in these cases, where the following documents are included with the application: A cover letter indicating that the application is for a non-EEA national married to an EU national; A copy of the EU spouse's passport pages showing photograph and personal details; A copy of the marriage certificate/marriage licence.

257. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment when a decision will issue in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary. [28431/07]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Micheál Martin): The Employment Permits Section of my Department is considering an appeal on behalf of the above named applicant and informs me that this person was refused because his immigration status as a student precluded him from entering full-time employment in the State. An appeal was received on the 27 September and is at present under consideration.

Employment Rights.

258. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if, in view of the worsening working conditions for persons employed in the private sector who are without trade union representation, the full

[Deputy Michael D. Higgins.]

force of law is given here to the EU employment directive on information and consultation; and the further legislation planned in the lifetime of this Government in this regard. [28595/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): I wish to assure the Deputy that Directive 2002/14/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of March 2002 establishing a general framework for informing and consulting employees in the European Community was fully transposed into Irish law by the Employees (Provision of Information and Consultation) Act 2006. This Act came into operation on the 24 July 2006. My Department has published an explanatory guide to the Act which is available on the Department's website (www.entemp.ie). There are no plans for further legislation at national or, as far as I am aware, at EU level in this regard.

Departmental Properties.

259. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if he will provide a table for the amount his 62 vacant factories or units owned or leased cost each year including payment for freehold and leasehold titles as well as all other operating costs for these properties; and if he will lay this out as a table for each property. [28627/07]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Micheál Martin): The management of IDA Ireland's industrial property portfolio is a day-to-day operational matter for the Agency and not one in which I have a function. However, I am informed that, at present, there are 27 vacant IDA-owned buildings and that, of the premises leased by IDA Ireland from private investors, 35 are vacant.

The cost associated with maintaining this portfolio consists principally of rent on the leased units, maintenance, repair and insurance. As the portfolio mix changes, with some becoming occupied while others become vacant, the cost of maintaining these properties varies over time. Furthermore, for reasons of commercial sensitivity, and in order to protect IDA's negotiating position in relation to its clients, it is not appropriate for information of this type to be released in respect of individual premises.

The availability of an adequate supply of serviced land and buildings is a key element of IDA Ireland's marketing strategy in the competition for mobile FDI.

Job Creation.

260. **Deputy Beverley Flynn** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the grant

assistance available to a new business (details supplied). [28665/07]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Micheál Martin): My Department does not provide direct funding or grants to businesses but provides funding to a number of State Agencies, including the County and City Enterprise Boards, Enterprise Ireland and FÁS, through whom assistance is delivered directly to businesses.

The 35 County and City Enterprise Boards provide a source of support to small businesses with 10 employees or fewer. Subject to certain eligibility criteria new and developing enterprises may qualify for financial support from the CEBs in the form of feasibility, employment and capital grants. All of the CEBs operate to the same criteria in relation to the assistance which they can offer i.e. they can support the establishment and/or the development of enterprises provided that the projects, which should generally be in the manufacturing and internationally traded services sector, have the capacity to achieve commercial viability and which over time may develop into strong exporting entities. In addition, the CEBs deliver a range of non-financial supports to improve management capability development within micro-enterprises designed to help new and existing enterprises to operate effectively and efficiently so as to last and grow.

Enterprise Ireland provides funding and expertise to companies with ten or more employees in the indigenous manufacturing and internationally traded services sectors who wish to expand through increased export activity. Through its network of 34 overseas offices, Enterprise Ireland assists client companies to create and implement successful strategies for market entry, development and growth.

EI Clients must be Irish owned, be a manufacturing or an internationally trading services enterprise or be an overseas company in the food, drink and timber sectors seeking assistance to locate in Ireland, must employ more than 10 people or be a high growth start-up according to criteria defined by the Board of EI. In addition Enterprise Ireland must be satisfied that the company will: produce products for sale primarily in world markets; produce products of an advanced technological nature for supply to internationally trading or skilled sub-supply firms within the State; and produce products for sectors of the Irish market which are subject to international competition or is a service industry, as defined by relevant ministerial order.

The person concerned should, in the first instance, make direct contact with their local CEB and explore what level of assistance, if any, may be available to them. Contact details for individual CEBs can be found by accessing the following website; www.enterpriseboards.ie

Ministerial Staff.

261. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by his Department on 1 November 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28146/07]

262. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the names, titles and

annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28161/07]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Séamus Brennan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 261 and 262 together.

On 1 November 2002 the following appointees of the former Minister for Arts, Sport & Tourism, Mr. John O'Donoghue T.D., were employed in the Department on temporary contracts.

Name	Title	Salary
Mr Tony Cotter	Special Adviser	Principal Officer Scale plus 10% attraction allowance
Mr Colin Miller	Personal Assistant	Higher Executive Officer Scale
Ms Mary O'Connell	Personal Secretary	Secretarial Assistant Scale plus 10% attraction allowance

I have appointed the following staff to temporary unestablished positions since becoming Minister for Arts, Sport & Tourism.

Name	Title	Salary
Mr Frank Lahiffe	Special Adviser	Principal Officer — General Service Standard Scale
Mr Tom Rowley	Press Adviser	Principal Officer — General Service Higher Scale
Mr Bobby Holland	Personal Assistant	On secondment from Dept. of Education & Science. Cost of replacement teacher recouped by that Department.
Ms Mary Browne	Personal Secretary	Secretarial Assistant Scale plus 10% attraction allowance

All these appointments were sanctioned by the Department of Finance.

Departmental Staff.

263. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the number of core function staff dealing with arts, sports and tourism relative to support staff numbers in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28243/07]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Séamus Brennan): There is currently a total of 177 staff serving in my Department which includes the National Archives. Of these 112 are dealing with Arts, Sport and Tourism functions while 65 staff are providing support services in areas such as Human Resources and Corporate Development, Finance, Information Technology, Audit and in my Private and Constituency Offices. It should also be noted that there are 18 agencies under the aegis of my Department involved in the implementation of policies and programmes, relating to the three sectors under its remit, in respect of which my Department has responsibility for corporate governance matters. As the staffing numbers in my Department are relatively small it does not benefit from economies of scale in regard to the provision of support services.

Sports Capital Programme.

264. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the value of grants committed to projects under the sports capital programme in 2007; the value of budgetary provision for sports capital grants in 2007; the value of grants awarded in 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28244/07]

265. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the value of grants committed to projects under the sports capital programme in 2006; the value of budgetary provision for sports capital grants in 2006; the value of grants awarded in 2006; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28245/07]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Séamus Brennan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 264 and 265 together.

The sports capital programme, which is administered by my Department, allocates funding to sporting and community organisations at local, regional and national level throughout the country. In 2006, provisional sports capital allocations totalling €91,835,997 were made to 859 separate projects. The allocation in the subhead for that year was €60,053,000 including an amount carried over from 2005 of €5,000,000. In 2007, provisional sports capital allocations totalling €85,000,000

[Deputy Séamus Brennan.]

have been made to 935 separate projects. The allocation in the subhead for this year is €63,092,000 including an amount carried over from 2006 of €13,842,000.

Swimming Pool Projects.

266. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the number of applications for swimming pool capital grants that remain on hand from the round which closed to applications in 2000; the value of grant aid sought which is outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28246/07]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Séamus Brennan): Under the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme, which is administered by my Department, grant aid is provided to local authorities towards the capital costs of a new or replacement public swimming pool or the refurbishment of an existing pool provided by local authorities themselves or by other bodies where the application for capital funding is supported by the local authority. Under the Programme there are four stages in a swimming pool project. These, in order of progress, are: Feasibility Study/Preliminary Report; Contract Documents; Tender and Construction. Local authorities may not proceed to the next stage of a project until prior approval issues from my Department. Grant aid is only formally allocated when the tender is approved. The Department's technical advisors, the Office of Public Works (OPW), evaluates each stage.

The current round of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme closed to new applications on 31 July 2000 and the priority is to continue to support those projects remaining within the programme. Of the 57 projects within the current round, 42 projects have been formally allocated grant aid, of which 28 have been completed and 14 are under construction or about to start construction. 4 projects are out to tender and the remaining 11 are at earlier stages in the process.

On the basis that all of the projects currently within the programme proceed to completion and if each receives the maximum grant of €3.8m, a total amount of some €85m will be required to complete this round. In 2007, the Subhead provision for this programme is €25m and this amount is expected to be drawn down by grantees by the end of the year.

On 25 October last, in response to a Priority Question from the Deputy, I agreed to check out the position in relation to funding for the programme under the National Development Plan. As I indicated in my reply, there is a provision of €184m in the National Development Plan, 2007-2013 in respect of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme. This provision is to meet costs

associated with the existing programme and the commencement of a new programme. Because of the long lead time involved in the development of a public swimming pool project, the need to give priority to and maintain activity on those projects within the current round, funding must be planned on a multi-annual basis. When the next round of the programme is launched, there will be sufficient funding available to finish projects within the current round and grant aid new projects under the next round. However, as the programme is application based, financial demand on a year-to-year basis can be difficult to assess. However, I would point out that the priority which attaches to this programme can be gauged from the fact that since the current round of the programme began in 2000, the full grant aid requirements of the programme have been met in full each year.

Museum Projects.

267. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism his views on establishing a city museum for Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28249/07]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Séamus Brennan): There will be significant enhancement in the coming years in the cultural institutions in Dublin City. My Department is currently engaged in projects to develop the existing National Cultural Institutions in the City. Within the framework of the National Development Plan 2007-2013, funding is being allocated for the construction of a Centre Block at the Collins Barracks premises of the National Museum of Ireland. The development of the Centre Block will be a major extension of the facilities at Collins Barracks and the proposal is that it will include major new exhibitions and will also display the historic vessel, the Asgard, upon completion of the programme for its conservation.

A major redevelopment of the Natural History Museum in Merrion Street is also to be undertaken which will upgrade the Museum's facilities and will address accessibility issues. The funding in the National Development Plan will also provide for a programme for the enhancement of facilities of the Irish Museum of Modern Art in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, the National Library of Ireland, the National Gallery of Ireland, the National Concert Hall and the Abbey Theatre.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to establish a Museum of Irish Literature in Parnell Square and this is currently being progressed by Dublin City Council in consultation with my Department. It also contains a commitment to establish a National Sports Museum and locating it in the National Museum

of Ireland at Collins Barracks is being progressed at present. Furthermore, the Programme for Government contains commitments regarding the establishment of the GPO as a museum of celebration of Irish progress and achievement across a broad spectrum as a landmark 1916 centenary project, and the restoration of 16 Moore Street and the establishment therein of an interpretative centre to honour those who fought in the 1916 Rising. These latter projects are also being progressed.

Film Industry Development.

268. **Deputy Joe Behan** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism if discussions have taken place between his Department and the other owners of studios (details supplied) in County Wicklow regarding the future viability of the studios; if consideration has been or is being given to the possible sale of the land on which the studios are based; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28421/07]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Séamus Brennan): No direct discussions have taken place between my Department and the owners of the studios in question. Contact between the owners and the Irish Film Board is ongoing. The availability of adequate, fully equipped studio resources that can cater for the needs of indigenous and incoming film/TV productions is, however, a key factor in the Irish Film Board's role of marketing Ireland as a film location. The Irish Film Board is currently reviewing all the available options in relation to studio facilities in Ireland and will be reporting to my Department in early course.

National Library.

269. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism if he has received the report into the purchase of the Finnegan's Wake documents; if he will publish that report when he has received it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28497/07]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Séamus Brennan): I have received the report referred to by the Deputy and I intend to publish it shortly.

Sports Capital Programme.

270. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism if an organisation with a 21 year lease will be considered for eligibility under the sports capital grant; the reason it had to be in excess of 21 years under previous schemes; if he will review the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28498/07]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Séamus Brennan): The position is that under the Sports Capital Programme, grantees in receipt of funding over a specified level must enter into a Deed of Covenant and Charge in order to protect the Minister's interest and ensure that the property remains in sporting use. This places a charge on the grantee's property and in this regard, my Department is advised by the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CCSO) that a lease of twenty-one years is required in law to create a legal estate capable of supporting a charge. However, where a lease is required to be registered in the Property Registration Authority, and a solicitor fails to register the lease in time and part of the twenty-one year term then expires, the Property Registration Authority will not register the lease, and the charge that is required cannot be secured.

It is to ensure, therefore, that the lease may be registered within the timeframe required, so that the charge can be secured, that my Department, acting on the advice of the CSSO, has requested a lease of not less than twenty-two years. In this regard, it provides a safeguard for organisations that apply for capital funding under the Sports Capital Programme.

These stipulations apply to new unregistered leases only, as existing registered leases of twenty-one years or more are capable of supporting a charge. In such instances, the applicant must provide evidence that the lease has been registered with the Property Registration Authority with a minimum of 15 years remaining.

Social Welfare Code.

271. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if he will review the guidelines in relation to what his Department considers as means (details supplied). [28089/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): The State pension (non-contributory) is a social assistance scheme and, in common with all other such schemes, features a means test. In assessing eligibility for social assistance payments, the means test is based on household income. This is to ensure that resources committed to social assistance payments are used to provide support and improve the position of those who are most in need.

The effectiveness of the means testing arrangements is kept under review and in this context, the new enhanced State pension (non-contributory) introduced in September 2006 features significant improvements in the means test. When the new scheme was introduced, the basic means disregard increased from €7.60 per week to €20 per week, benefiting some 34,000 pensioners on reduced rates. The means disregard was further increased to €30 per week in Budget

[Deputy Martin Cullen.]

2007 resulting in increased payments for some 26,000 pensioners.

The improved disregards are of particular benefit to those without a contributory pension entitlement who are receiving pensions from other jurisdictions. In this regard, there are about 11,400 British Retirement Pensioners in receipt of State pension (non-contributory) with some 2,250 of these qualifying for the maximum rate. Means testing arrangements will be kept under review and changes considered where appropriate.

Ministerial Staff.

272. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the names, titles

and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by his Department on 1 November 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28157/07]

273. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28172/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): I propose to take Questions Nos. 272 and 273 together.

The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following tables.

Table A — position at 1st November 2002

Name	Title	Salary Scale
Mel Cousins	Special Adviser	Principal Higher Scale
Tom Reddy	Press Adviser	Principal
Bridget Byrne	Personal Secretary to Minister Mary Coughlan	Secretarial Assistant
Kathleen Ayres	Personal Assistant to Minister Mary Coughlan	Higher Executive Officer
Marina Gaffney	Clerical Officer	Clerical Officer

Table B – position at 13 November 2007

Name	Title	Salary Scale
Michelle Hoctor	Press Adviser	Principal
Inez O'Neill	Personal Secretary to Minister Martin Cullen	Secretarial Assistant
Sean Dower	Personal Assistant to Minister Martin Cullen	Higher Executive Officer
Pat Daly	Constituency Assistant to Minister Martin Cullen	Higher Executive Officer

Pay scales for administrative grades are available on the Department of Finance website (www.finance.gov.ie). The pay scale, in November 2002, for Secretarial Assistants was in the range €17,469.34 to €32,475.76.

Social Welfare Benefits.

274. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the status of the social welfare benefits due a person (details supplied) in Dublin 7 who is in a women's refuge as a result of domestic violence and who reports they have not been receiving social welfare payments. [28232/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): The person concerned recently applied for, and was refused basic supplementary allowance. She appealed the decision to the Executive's designated Appeals Officer who upheld the decision. The case has been sent to the Chief Appeals Officer of my Department who

are examining her appeal. The person concerned has an appointment for an oral hearing on 22 November 2007.

275. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the reason a person (details supplied) in County Longford is entitled to a contributory pension but at a reduced rate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28273/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): To qualify for a full rate contributory pension a yearly average of 48 contributions is required. According to the records of my Department, the person concerned has a total of 780 contributions paid and credited in the period from 1963 to 2006. This gives him a yearly average of 18, and entitles him to a rate of €157 State Pension (Contributory) per week. He is also on receipt of a Living Alone Allowance of €7.70 per week. This pension has been in payment since the date of entitlement in October 2006.

Social Welfare Appeals.

276. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the number of medical referees attached to his Department; the number of medical referee refusals and approvals by each referee; and the number of those refusals that were subsequently allowed on appeal. [28386/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): There are 19 Medical Assessors employed by my Department, plus a Deputy Chief Medical Advisor and the Chief Medical Advisor. Medical Assessors carried out some 73,200 desk reviews and 29,200 examinations in 2006. In some 7,400 cases the claimant was found not to satisfy the medical criteria for receipt of the allowance or benefit. The opinion of the Medical Assessor represents an important part of the evidence on which decisions are made by Deciding Officers in cases relating to illness or disability. Overall figures regarding medical assessments are maintained, however, there is no breakdown by individual medical assessors

Where an appeal is lodged against the decision on medical grounds a second medical assessment is carried out by a different medical assessor. Some 3,700 appeal assessments were examined by Medical Assessors in 2006 and the original medical opinion was confirmed in almost 2,000 cases. While the majority of these cases would have been subsequently processed by the Social Welfare Appeals Office it is not possible to say what the outcome was in those specific cases.

During 2006 the Social Welfare Appeals Office finalised some 2,700 appeals in which the medical assessment was the subject of the appeal. Of these, some 55% of the appeals were allowed and 45% disallowed.

Social Welfare Code.

277. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the cost per year of increasing the earnings disregard under the social welfare allowance rent mortgage supplement by €25 per week to €100 per week. [28396/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): The exact cost of increasing the earnings disregard under the rent and mortgage interest supplement schemes by €25 per week to €100 per week is unknown due to the wide variations in rents and mortgages paid by household of different sizes and the unknown impact of such increases on the take-up of the scheme. As an indicative guide, it is estimated that the proposal could add some €2.3 million to scheme costs in a full year.

278. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the cost per year of increasing the income threshold for

entitlement to the one parent family payment by €100 per week to €500 per week. [28397/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): The estimated cost of increasing the upper earnings disregard for recipients of the one parent family payment is €6.6 million for a full year.

279. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the cost per year of removing the old limit of €317.43 for back to school clothing and footwear allowance where it applies and increase it to €400. [28398/07]

286. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the cost per year of increasing all the minimum income limits for the back to school clothing and footwear allowance by €20. [28520/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): I propose to take Questions Nos. 279 and 286 together.

The income limits for the BSCFA scheme for 2007 are based on the maximum rate of state pension (contributory) (under 80), plus the qualified adult allowance, plus €100 in the case of married and cohabiting couples; and the maximum rate of widow's/widower's contributory pension (under 80) plus €100 for Lone Parents, plus child dependant allowance in each case. Income Limits for 2007 are €470.80 for a couple with one child and €331.30 for a lone parent with one child.

The limit is increased by €22.00 for each qualifying child. In line with other secondary benefits, a means test is applied to ensure that limited resources are directed to those in greatest need. Apart from a number of exceptions, all household income, including welfare payments is assessable as means under the BSCFA scheme in accordance with the normal assessment for supplementary welfare allowance. The exceptions to these rules are that any income received in the form of family income supplement (FIS), higher level education grants or the first €120 earnings from employment of a rehabilitative nature is disregarded for the purposes of the BSCFA scheme.

A 'secondary' income limit for BSCFA applied to those who did not qualify on standard means grounds but who satisfied all other conditions and were eligible to receive BSCFA if their gross household income did not exceed €317.43 per week. This limit of €317.43 was used in situations where applicants were on designated back to work or education schemes or other employment initiatives. The value of this secondary limit has been eroded progressively by the passage of time and the limit of is being phased out for entitlement to BSCFA.

It is not possible to accurately project the impact of removing the old limit of €317.43, or

[Deputy Martin Cullen.]

increasing this limit to €400.00 on expenditure on the BSCFA. The additional numbers qualifying would depend on the number of hours worked, if any, for each individual applicant, the training course or employment initiative being undertaken, any additional household income or means, and also the social welfare or health service payment of the applicant. Estimated calculations, based on projected income limit increases, have shown that somewhere in the order of an additional 1,000 people would qualify for BSCFA by raising the minimum income limits by €20.00. This would increase the annual expenditure on the scheme by €0.5m.

I consider the back to school clothing and footwear allowance scheme to be an important support for parents at a time of particular financial strain. The main BSCFA income limits have increased over recent years and as the limits are aligned to pension payments they are automatically indexed upward each year with budget increases. Any further improvements to the scheme would have to be considered in the light of resources available in Budget 2008 for improvements in social welfare payments generally. .

280. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the cost per year of increasing the daily income disregard for jobseekers benefit to €25. [28399/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): Jobseeker's benefit is an insurance based payment and the daily income disregard does not apply to this scheme. I presume the Deputy is inquiring about jobseeker's allowance and farm assist which are means tested payments where casual worker's earnings are assessed with a daily income disregard of €20. There are approximately 5,800 casual workers in receipt of jobseeker's allowance. To increase the daily earnings disregard for these workers would cost some €2.7m.

This income disregard was increased last September as a result of changes introduced in Budget 2007. Previously there was a daily income disregard of €12.70 for casual workers, which did not apply to workers with qualified children. The new arrangements extended this disregard to all casual workers.

The daily earnings disregard of €20 was also extended to the spouse or partner of a recipient of jobseeker's allowance, pre-retirement allowance, farm assist and disability allowance. This significantly simplified and streamlined the assessment of means from earnings for this group. It is not currently possible to estimate the cost of increasing the disregard for this group as my department is in the process of reviewing the means assessment for these recipients. When this

review is completed I will be in a position to give an estimated cost for this proposed increase.

281. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the cost per year of reducing the weekly hours of work required to be eligible for family income support to 15 hours per week or at least 30 hours every fortnight. [28400/07]

284. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the cost per year of increasing the minimum payment of family income support from €20 per week to €30 per week. [28501/07]

288. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the estimated cost per year of extending the family income supplement to participants on the back to work enterprise allowance. [28522/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): I propose to take Questions Nos. 281, 284 and 288 together.

It is not possible to estimate the cost of reducing the required minimum hours from 38 hours per fortnight to 30 hours per fortnight in time available as the number of additional people in a position to avail of the supplement would have to be ascertained, taking into account the availability of existing disregards and tapered withdrawal of payments. Furthermore, as FIS is designed to ensure the maintenance of a significant attachment to the workforce, a reduction in the number of hours required to be eligible for FIS would work against the thrust of the scheme.

The annual cost of increasing the minimum FIS weekly payment from €20 to €30 is estimated at some €0.8 million. This is based on the current number of people who are availing of the supplement and receiving the minimum payment. It is not possible to estimate the cost of extending FIS to participants on back to work enterprise allowance (BTEA) scheme as FIS is a means-tested social assistance payment targeted at low-income families, while the back to work enterprise allowance programme is not means-tested, as it guarantees a percentage of the social welfare payment which applied prior to taking up self-employment, regardless of the level of income from the self-employment. Any extension of FIS in the ways proposed would have to be considered in the context of policy development and budgetary constraints.

Social Welfare Benefits.

282. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be

awarded and paid the State non-contributory pension from their 66th birthday. [28406/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): The person concerned made an application for a State Pension Non Contributory in September 2007. Following investigation by a Social Welfare Inspector the customer was assessed with a weekly means of €75.57 based on following earnings:—

- Net yearly earnings from holding €7,860.00
- Moiety (half the means of a couple living together) €3,930.00

She was informed on 23 October 2007 that she would be entitled to a State Pension Non Contributory at the reduced rate of €152.50 per week from the 11 January 2008. She was also informed that she would be better off financially to remain as a qualified adult on her spouse's State Pension (Contributory), which will be payable at the weekly rate of €173.00 from 11 January 2008 when she reaches 66 years of age. As it is the Department's policy to pay the higher amount, it is proposed that she remain as a qualified adult on her spouse's contributory pension. She can avail of the option of having the qualified adult allowance paid directly to her by returning the form that has issued for this purpose.

283. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs when a renewal application for family income supplement for a person (details supplied) in County Mayo was received in his Department; the length of time it took to process the application; when a decision was reached; and if the payment has commenced to the applicant. [28463/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): Due to high volumes of claims in the FIS section, there have been delays in processing claims. My Department has introduced measures to directly address the timeliness of claim processing for FIS:

- A review of existing processes and procedures has been carried out with the explicit objective of reducing delays in claim processing;
- Priority is being given to renewal claims to ensure continuity of payment;
- Additional resources have been applied specifically to improve delivery of service and the ongoing staffing requirement has been reviewed.

These measures will, over time, lead to more efficient processing and reduce the number of claims on hand. The position is being closely monitored by my Department.

The person concerned was awarded Family Income Supplement (FIS) for a period of 12 months from 20th July 2006 and payment continued to 18th July 2007. She made a renewal claim on 2nd July 2007. This claim was not examined until the 22nd of October 2007. When the case was examined, it was found that the applicant was in receipt of Illness Benefit payment of 240.80 euro per week. This payment continued until 1st of September. A decision was made on the FIS renewal application on 22/10/2007. The person concerned was awarded FIS at the weekly rate of €246 from 06/09/2007. The first payment, including arrears of €1968 was made on 30 October 2007.

Question No. 284 answered with Question No. 281.

Social Welfare Code.

285. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the cost per year of increasing the maximum disability allowance payment of €185.80 per week by €20 to €205.50 per week. [28502/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): The cost per year of a €20 increase in the maximum personal rate of Disability Allowance to €205.50 per week is €100.98m. This figure includes both the increases for the personal rate as well as the proportionate increases for Qualified Adults.

Question No. 286 answered with Question No. 279.

287. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the cost per year of increasing the disability allowance limit for disregarded earnings applying to rehabilitative work from €120 per week to €150 per week. [28521/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): As of 1 June, 2006, the income disregard for Disability Allowance is no longer a flat income limit of €120 but instead operates on the basis of a tapered withdrawal rate between €120 and €350. This means that all income up to €120 is disregarded as means when assessing entitlement, while income between €120 and €350 is assessed on the basis of 50 cents for every euro earned. The effect of this tapered withdrawal rate is that a single person can earn up to €420 per week before their Disability Allowance fully ceases.

Prior to the introduction of the tapered withdrawal, a flat income limit of €120 was in place meaning that once a person exceeded earnings of €120 per week, payment of their Disability Allowance was withdrawn on a euro for euro

[Deputy Martin Cullen.]

basis. The result of this approach for a single person was that he/she could earn up to a maximum of €240 per week before payment of Disability Allowance fully ceased. The approach, suggested by the Deputy, of increasing the income disregard to €150 would have a full year cost of approximately €7.8m and would have the initial benefit of disregarding all income up to level. However, this would also mean that all income above €150 would be assessed on a euro for euro basis, providing no incentive to increase earnings from employment above that level.

Such an approach conflicts with one of the underlying policy principles relating to incentives to work, i.e. that there must be a reward for working. A review published by the Department of Social and Family Affairs in 2004 of the Illness and Disability Payment Schemes suggested that continually increasing the income disregard level is not the most appropriate answer to the disincentive problem. Instead, that Review favoured introducing a mechanism which would allow for the gradual reduction of social welfare benefits as earnings increase, thereby allowing people who increase their earnings or employment potential to see an increase in the overall income level. It was in this context that the tapered withdrawal rate was introduced in 2006 and has, thus far, resulted in a 30 per cent increase in the number of people availing of the disregard for earnings from rehabilitative employment.

Question No. 288 answered with Question No. 281.

289. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if there are plans to review the carer's allowance in relation to the use of a means test to calculate the amount of carer's allowance payable to applicants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28559/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): Supporting and recognising carers in our society is, and has been, a priority of the Government since 1997. Over that period, weekly payment rates to carers have greatly increased, qualifying conditions for carer's allowance have significantly eased, coverage of the scheme has been extended and new schemes such as carer's benefit and the respite care grant have been introduced and extended. The primary objective of the carer's allowance is to provide income support to low income carers. Carer's allowance, in line with other social assistance schemes, is means tested. This ensures scarce resources are directed at those in greatest need.

The carer's allowance means test is one of the more flexible tests in terms of the assessment of household incomes. The means test has been significantly eased over the years most notably with

regard to spouse's earnings. Budget 2007 provided for an income disregard for a couple of €640 per week. This ensures a couple can earn in the region of €36,000 per annum and still receive the maximum rate of carer's allowance and the associated free travel and household benefits. This measure surpasses the Towards 2016 commitment to ensure those on average industrial earnings continue to qualify for a full carer's allowance.

In addition, the rates of carer's allowance have been increased to €200 per week for those aged under 66 and to €218 per week for those aged over 66. From June 2005, the respite care grant was extended to all carers who are providing full time care and attention to a person who needs such care, regardless of their income. Those persons in receipt of other social welfare payments, excluding jobseeker's allowance and benefit, are entitled to this payment subject to meeting the full time care condition. From June 2007, the level of the grant was increased by €300 to €1,500 per year.

The complete abolition of the means test would have substantial cost implications and it is debatable whether this could be considered to be the best use of resources. The view of some support and health organisations is that it would be much more beneficial to carers if additional resources were invested in the type of community care services which would support them in their caring role, such as additional respite care facilities, more home helps, public health nurses and other such services. I will keep the supports for carers available from my Department under review in order to continue to improve the schemes and ensure commitments on income support are delivered.

Social Welfare Appeals.

290. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs when an oral hearing will be held for a person (details supplied) in County Mayo who has been refused their claim for disability allowance. [28569/07]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Martin Cullen): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that, in accordance with the statutory requirements, the papers of the person concerned have been forwarded to my Department for their comments on the grounds of appeal. On receipt of their response the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer for early consideration. The Social Welfare Appeals Office is an office of my Department that is independently responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Security of the Elderly.

291. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for

Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs when a decision will issue to a group (details supplied) in County Tipperary in relation to security for the elderly. [28104/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): An application was received by my Department on 23 October last from the group in question under the Scheme of Community Support of Older People. Such applications are generally processed speedily and I expect to have a decision on the group's application shortly.

292. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the grants or assistance available to a person in receipt of the State pension to purchase a house alarm in view of the expense of such alarms; and

Name	Title	Salary Level
Éadaoin Ní Mhongaile	Media Adviser	Principal Officer level 11% superannuation payment adjustment
Máire Ní Choisdealbha	Personal Assistant	Higher Executive Officer Level
Máire Ní Fhlatharta	Personal Secretary	Secretarial Assistant level an allowance equal to 10% of salary
—	Special Adviser *	—

* The position of Special Adviser had not been filled at that time.

294. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28163/07]

Name	Title	Salary Level
Pádraic Ó hUiginn	Special Adviser	Principal Officer level + 11% superannuation payment adjustment
Layla de Cogan Chin	Media Adviser	Assistant Principal Officer Level
Muireann Ní Thuairisg	Personal Assistant	Higher Executive Officer Level
Máire Ní Fhlatharta	Personal Secretary	Secretarial Assistant level + an allowance equal to 10% of salary

Údarás na Gaeltachta.

295. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dinny McGinley** den Aire Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta cad iad na comhlachtaí agus na fiontair a bhfuil tacaíocht ó Údarás na Gaeltachta acu i nGaeltacht Iardheisceart Dhún na nGall ó Ghleann Cholm Cille go Cill Chartha; cad é an líon daoine atá fostaithe i ngach ceann acu agus cad iad na spriocanna fostaíochta don cheantar sin sa bhliain amach romhainn; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [28555/07]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Dírím aird an Teachta ar an bhfreagra a thug mé ar Cheist Dála

if he will make a statement on the matter. [28190/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Questions 249 and 245 of 10 October 2007.

Ministerial Staff.

293. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by his Department on 1 November 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28148/07]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The information sought by the Deputy is set out in the table.

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The information sought by the Deputy in respect of appointees currently serving is set out in the table.

Uimh 382 ar 16 Deireadh Fómhair 2007. Bíonn iarrachtaí leanúnacha ar siúl ag Údarás na Gaeltachta chun deiseanna fostaíochta agus forbartha a chruthú i ngach ceantar Gaeltachta, ceantar iardheisceart Dhún na nGall ina measc.

Tuigim ón Údarás go bhfuil thart ar 94 cliant aige faoi láthair i nGaeltacht Iardheisceart Dhún na nGall, is é sin, comhlachtaí agus gnóthais eile atá i bhfeidhm sa cheantar a fuair tacaíocht ón Údarás nó a bhfuil tacaíocht ceadaithe dóibh. Ag deireadh na bliana 2006 bhí 389 fostaithe go lánaimseartha agus 115 fostaithe go séasúrach nó páirtaimseartha i 78 tionscadail a fuair cúnaimh ón Údarás. Bhí raon fostaíochta ó dhuine amháin go breis is 100 post i gceist sna tionscadail éagsúla. Tá iarrtha agam ar an Údarás briseadh síos

[Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív.]

ar na figiúirí do 2006 a sheoladh díreach chuig an Teachta.

296. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dinny McGinley** den Aire Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta cad iad na comhlachtaí agus na fiontair a bhfuil tacaíocht ó Údarás na Gaeltachta acu atá ag gníomhú i gceantar Chloich Cheann Fhaola faoi láthair, cad é an líon daoine atá fostaithe i ngach ceann acu agus cad iad na spriocanna fostaíochta don cheantar sin sa bhliain amach romhainn. [28556/07]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Dírím aird an Teachta ar an bhfreagra a thug mé ar Cheist Dála Uimh 41 ar 24 Aibreán 2007 agus ar Cheist Dála Uimh 7 ar 1 Samhain 2007.

Tuigim ón Údarás go bhfuil thart ar 109 cliant aige faoi láthair i gceantar Chloich Chionnaola, is é sin, comhlachtaí agus gnóthais eile atá i bhfeidhm sa cheantar, a fuair tacaíocht ón Údarás nó a bhfuil tacaíocht ceadaithe dóibh. Ag deireadh na bliana 2006 bhí 132 fostaithe go lánaimseartha agus 145 fostaithe go séasúrach nó go páirtaimseartha in 82 tionscadail a fuair cúnaimh ón Údarás. Bhí raon fostaíochta ó dhuine amháin go breis is 44 post idir lánaimseartha agus páirtaimseartha i gceist sna tionscadail éagsúla. Tá iarrtha agam ar an Údarás briseadh síos ar na figiúirí do 2006 a sheoladh díreach chuig an Teachta.

Coastal Protection.

297. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the funding she will allocate to address a coastal erosion problem (details supplied) in County Mayo. [28432/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The beach at The Valley, Dugort, Co. Mayo is owned by Mayo County Council and responsibility for its maintenance is a matter for the local authority in the first instance. In accordance with a recent government decision responsibility for Coastal Protection will be transferred to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

298. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason her Department made no allocation to Louth County Council for coastal protection; the further reason her Department earlier in 2007 stated that no application was made by Louth County Council for coastal protection; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28583/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): A further examination of my Department's files indicates that a funding application was received from Louth Co. Co. on 26 January 2007. This application together with

all other applications received, was given consideration when drawing up the 2007 National Coastal Protection Programme. The total funding available for Coast Protection works in 2007 was €3.037 million. Projects were assessed subject the availability of Exchequer funding and overall national priorities. Unfortunately, my Department was not in a position to provide funding for a number of projects including the ones applied for by Louth County Council.

In accordance with a recent government decision responsibility for Coastal Protection will be transferred to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. I regret any confusion caused by my Department's earlier statement that no application was received from Louth County Council.

Foreshore Licences.

299. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she has received a foreshore licence application from Mayo County Council in relation to a development (details supplied); and the status of same. [28645/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): An application was made to my Department by Mayo County Council on 30 May 2007 for a foreshore lease to facilitate construction of a slipway at Kilcummin, Co Mayo. The application was circulated to the Department's consultees for assessment and comment. The Development Applications Unit of the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government has requested that a full underwater archaeological assessment of the area be carried out. This request has been communicated to Mayo County Council. Responses are also awaited from the Department's Engineering Division and the Valuation Office.

Tree Planting.

300. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will provide funding on a once off basis following the outbreak of fireblight in the Sutton area in order that semi-mature trees would be planted; if she will ensure that this Deputy is forwarded with a copy of the full test results of trees tested in roads (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28036/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Food has no responsibility for funding of Local Authority projects. The question of the provision of funding towards the replacement of trees where an outbreak of fireblight occurred is a matter for the Local Authority (Fingal) and the Department of the Environment, as is the case with similar findings in other local authority areas. A copy of the results which my Department received from the State

Laboratory in respect of the samples found to be positive for fireblight in the Verbena Avenue/Sutton areas has been forwarded to the Deputy already.

Grant Payments.

301. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a decision on the case of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath referred to her Department by the agriculture appeals office; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28072/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The herdowner applied under Category A of the 2006 National Reserve which catered for farmers who inherited, leased or otherwise received land free of charge or for a nominal amount, from a farmer who retired or died before 16 May 2005, and where the land was leased out to a third party during the reference period 2000-2002. Applicants who are applying on leased in land must commit to a lease for a minimum of 5 years. The person in this case did not fulfil the criteria for this Category as the documentation submitted by him indicated that he was only leasing the lands for 3 years.

The herdowner appealed this decision and his file was forwarded to the Independent Single Payments Appeals Committee who completed their review and upheld my Department's decision. A letter outlining the Committee's decision was issued to the herdowner on 1 October 2007. Subsequently the herdowner submitted further documentation to the Committee that was forwarded to my Department for consideration. My Department has further reviewed this case but the documentation provided was not sufficient to allow for the original decision to be revoked. My Department has written to the herdowner requesting clarification on the documentation submitted. When this information is received my Department will be in a position to consider the matter further.

Name	Title	Annual Salary
Danny Carroll	Special Advisor	€65,778 – €81,126 plus €10,000 allowance
Ellen McCarthy	Personal Assistant	€33,397 – €42,336
Catherine Callaghan	Personal Secretary	€16,797 – €32,407 plus 10% allowance

304. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by her; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28160/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The information

Foreshore Leases.

302. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to Parliamentary Question No. 392 of 23 October 2007, the length of time the legal advisers to her Department have been examining the issues referred to in the reply; when the examination will be concluded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28128/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): This concerns my Department's refusal to grant a foreshore lease to facilitate a Marina development as the developer does not have a means of access to the proposed site. The developer has raised certain legal issues concerning this refusal. Following consideration of all the issues associated with this case by officials of my Department it was decided that specific legal advice would be necessary. This was first sought on 28 May 2007. Consideration of the issues by my Department and its legal advisors has been ongoing since that date. I have asked my officials to expedite consideration of the matters raised.

Ministerial Staff.

303. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by her Department on 1 November 2002; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28145/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table. I should also point out that in the 1994 – 1997 Government the then Minister appointed both a Special Adviser and Programme Manager at Principal Officer level, the current salary scale which is €82,016-€101,446 as well as a Personal Secretary and Personal Assistant. In addition a Public Relations Consultancy was also used during that period.

requested by the Deputy is set out in the table. I should also point out that in the 1994 – 1997 Government the then Minister appointed both a Special Adviser and Programme Manager at Principal Officer level, the current salary scale which is €82,016 – €101,446 as well as a Personal Secretary and Personal Assistant. In addition a Public Relations Consultancy was also used during that period.

[Deputy Mary Coughlan.]

Name	Title	Annual Salary
Dermot Murphy	Special Advisor	€82,016 – €101,446 10% allowance
Paula O'Brien	Personal Assistant	€44,314 – €56,250
Bridget Byrne	Personal Secretary	€22,064 – €42,571 10% allowance
Marina Gaffney	TCO	€22,058 – €35,773

Farm Improvement Scheme.

305. **Deputy Pádraic McCormack** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason the farm improvement scheme has been abolished after such a short period in view of the fact that the scheme enabled farmers to achieve competitiveness and meet very high environmental standards and the raft of new obligations and restrictions imposed on farmers by the Government; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28204/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Farm Improvement Scheme was launched by my Department in July 2007 with a funding provision of €79 million as agreed under the partnership agreement, Towards 2016. On 31 October last, I announced that, as applications under the Scheme had reached this level of funding, the Scheme would close to new applications for now. The applications received under the Scheme will be processed up to the level of funding available and payments will, of course, issue to farmers under the Scheme as work which has been approved to commence is completed by farmers to the specifications required thereunder.

Grant Payments.

306. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason the disadvantaged area payment scheme and single farm 50% payment to a person (details supplied) in County Mayo has been delayed following an overlap problem created by another herdowner; when a forestry inspector for the area will give their observations on this issue in view of the fact that her Department promised this over two months ago, that it is quite clear that the land is used for grazing rather than forestry, that the herdowner is under severe financial pressure due to this issue which they have not caused and that the Department is taking several months to resolve the matter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28205/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The issues that arose during the processing of the 2007 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application for the person named have now been resolved. Therefore, the 50% Advance payment

under the Single Payment Scheme and the payment under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme will issue shortly to the person named.

307. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan will receive their single payment entitlements; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28208/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): An application to transfer entitlements from the father of the person named was received on 15th May 2007. The delay occurred because the transferor incorrectly quoted the herd number of the person named on the application form. This problem has now been resolved and the Single Payment will issue shortly to the person named.

308. **Deputy Michael D'Arcy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if a second site inspection is necessary for an application for farm waste management by a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; if so, when this inspection will be carried out; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28210/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The person named is an applicant under both the Farm Waste Management and Farm Improvement Schemes. The grant application under the Farm Improvement Scheme includes proposed buildings that warrant a pre-approval inspection. A decision will be made in relation to the application as soon as possible.

309. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when an area based payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal. [28271/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): An application under the 2007 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 17 April 2007. The Terms and Conditions governing the scheme require, inter alia, that applicants maintain a minimum stocking density on their holding of 0.15 livestock units per forage hectare declared for at least three consecutive months. However, where the holding of an applicant is identified as

not meeting this minimum requirement, the person in question is invited to submit evidence of satisfactory stocking i.e. Flock Register, Horse Passports or details of a REPS or Commonage Framework Plan, which provides for a lower stocking level.

The person named was written to and invited to submit appropriate evidence of the number of sheep maintained on his farm. On receipt of a satisfactory response from the person named, the application will be further processed with a view to payment at an early date.

310. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the status of a single farm payment for a person (details supplied) in County Longford, particularly in relation to information from her Department relating to the number of transfers requested by the person which are being contested; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28278/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The person named established 47.92 entitlements during the reference years. He subsequently applied to transfer entitlements to four different parties under the Inheritance measure of the Single Payment Scheme. He was successful in his application to transfer entitlements to three of the parties some time ago, and the remaining 28.59 entitlements were transferred to the fourth party recently. The person named has now been successful in transferring all of his entitlements to the four parties concerned, and as such is not due a Single Farm Payment.

311. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the grounds on which payment under the single payment scheme to a person (details supplied) in County Longford was withheld on the grounds of non-compliance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28279/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): An application under the Single Payment Scheme /Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 1st May 2007. As part of the control procedures under EU legislation governing these Schemes, the application was randomly selected for and was the subject of a ground eligibility and cross-compliance inspection. During the course of the cross-compliance inspection, errors were discovered with regard to the identification and registration of bovine animals that resulted in a 1% cross compliance penalty being recorded.

The ground eligibility inspection resulted in discrepancies being found regarding one parcel. As a result, the claimed area of 43.44ha was reduced to 41.79ha. The person named was informed of these findings on the 4th September

2007. If the total area found is not sufficient to support the number of entitlements held, the penalties will be applied as per the Terms and Conditions of the scheme. In this case the number of entitlements held by the person named is 43.58. As the difference between the area declared and the area found is more than 3%, under EU Regulations, the difference between the area found and the area claimed is doubled and deducted from the area found. On this basis the area put forward for payment under the Single Payment Scheme and Disadvantaged Areas was 38.49ha.

Payment under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme totalling €3657.71 issued on the 20th September 2007. A Single Payment Scheme advance payment totalling €6514.39 issued on 16th October 2007. A request to review the findings of the eligibility inspection was received on the 24th of September 2007. This review is currently being considered and the person named will be informed of the outcome shortly. If the person concerned is not happy with the outcome of the review, he has the right to appeal to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office.

Farm Improvement Scheme.

312. **Deputy Margaret Conlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there are plans to provide funding for farm improvement schemes in 2008. [28408/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): A substantial number of payments to farmers will arise under the Farm Improvement Scheme during the course of 2008 for which funding will be provided in my Department's estimates for that year. Funding will also be provided in 2008 in respect of payments to farmers for approved works carried out under equivalent Schemes operated by my Department, such as the Farm Waste Management, Dairy Hygiene, Pig Welfare and Alternative Enterprises Schemes.

Grant Payments.

313. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the number of farmers who availed of the facility where they had one set of single farm payment entitlements of equal value and where the usage of entitlements was rotated annually in each of the years 2005, 2006 and 2007; the value of payments made to this category of applicant in each respective year; the regulation which facilitated this process; the mechanism by which they could sell or lease such entitlements; the reason for providing such a facility; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28412/07]

314. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the number of farmers who availed of the facility

[Deputy Denis Naughten.]

where they had two or more sets of single farm payment entitlements of different values and where the usage of entitlements was rotated annually in each of the years 2005, 2006 and 2007; the value of payments made to this category of applicant in each respective year; the regulation which facilitated this process; the reason for providing such a facility; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28413/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 313 and 314 together.

The operation of the Single Payment Scheme in Ireland, as in the case of other European Union Member States, is governed by the provisions of Council Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003, Commission Regulation (EC) No 795/2004 and Commission Regulation (EC) No 796/2004. The European Commission confirmed to my Department that under the provisions of these Regulations a farmer, who declares less eligible hectares than the number of payment entitlements he or she holds, is legally entitled to claim (utilise) different entitlements from the same set of entitlements each year thus ensuring that he does not lose entitlements to the National Reserve because of non usage. The processing and payment system maintained by my Department recognizes this right.

This arrangement could not be applied in cases where farmers had two or more sets of entitlements at different values. These farmers were allowed to nominate the entitlements that they wanted to use each year so as to avoid the forfeiture of entitlements to the National Reserve for non-usage. In the time available it has not been possible to determine the total value of payments made in 2005, 2006 and 2007 in these situations. I will arrange to have this information made available to the Deputy as soon as it becomes available.

Under the provisions of Article 45 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003, any payment entitlement that was not used for 3 years must, unless in cases of force majeure, be surrendered to the National Reserve. My Department is currently commencing a review of all cases where entitlements were not used in 2005, 2006 and 2007. This includes cases where a person activated his or her entitlements by submitting a Single Payment Scheme application in 2005 and did not declare any eligible hectares in any of the three years in question.

My Department will write to all of the farmers involved and they will be given an opportunity to submit written observations for consideration before a final decision is made to permanently surrender their entitlements to the National Reserve. The final outcome in relation to the level of unused entitlements will not be known until this process is complete.

Article 46 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003 deals with the provisions covering the transfer of entitlements. Payment entitlements can be transferred by sale with or without land but can only be sold without land once 80% have been used (declares one hectare of eligible land for each entitlement) in one calendar year. There is provision in this Article that if a farmer does not meet the 80% requirement, he or she can sell entitlements without land only after he has surrendered all of the unused entitlements in the first year of operation of the scheme (2005 in Ireland's case). Payment entitlements may only be leased out (by lease or rental agreement) if they are accompanied by an equivalent number of hectares of eligible land.

315. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a single farm payment will be made to persons (details supplied) County Donegal. [28438/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): An application was received on 30 October 2007 requesting a transfer of entitlements from the first person named to the joint names of the first and second persons named. As this application was received several months after the closing date for such applications, the persons named included a letter outlining the reasons for the delay. While the reasons for the delay have been accepted, it was noted that essential details were omitted from the application form and the form has been returned to the persons named for completion. On return of the completed application form, the requested transfer will be processed and payment will issue in due course.

316. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon was not approved allocation under the national reserve; if she will review the decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28494/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The person named submitted an application for an allocation of entitlements from the 2006 Single Payment Scheme National Reserve under Category A.

Category A caters for farmers who inherit, lease or receive land free of charge or for a nominal amount from a farmer who had retired or died by 16 May, 2005 and where the land was leased out by the original owner during the reference period 2000 to 2002. The person named has been deemed unsuccessful under this category as the land on which the application was based was leased out by the applicant during the reference period 2000 to 2002 and not by the original owner as required by the conditions governing the National Reserve.

A letter outlining my Department's decision issued to the person named on the 22nd October, 2007. The person named submitted an appeal against this decision on 1st November, 2007. The case was subsequently reviewed but it was considered that there were no grounds to effect a change to the original decision. This case has now been forwarded to the Independent Single Payments Appeals Committee who will carry out a full review of the case. The Independent Single Payments Appeals Committee will correspond directly with the person named following the outcome of their review.

317. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary. [28516/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The person named holds a total of 14.71 standard entitlements. He submitted an application to transfer 2.71 standard entitlements for 2007 to a third party by way of a one-year lease with land. The person named was requested to provide certain additional information. This was duly received and this application has now been fully processed. These 2.71 entitlements will revert to the person named at the end of the one-year lease.

As the person named has declared 12.14 hectares of land on his Single Payment application, he will receive full payment under the 2007 Scheme year for his remaining 12.00 standard entitlements. Payment will issue shortly.

Farm Improvement Scheme.

318. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she will reintroduce the farm improvement scheme to allow farmers to increase their capacity as this scheme was a central element in IFA's agreement to participate in the social partnership agreement Towards 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28523/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Farm Improvement Scheme was launched by my Department in July 2007 with a funding provision of €79 million as agreed under the partnership agreement, Towards 2016. As applications under the Scheme have reached this level of funding, I have announced that the Scheme will close to new applications for now. The agreement provides for a review of its terms in 2008 which will provide an opportunity to take stock of the outcomes achieved in relation to its overall goals and to both refocus and reprioritise.

Grant Payments.

319. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason a person (details supplied) in County Galway has not received increased entitlements from the national reserve; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28525/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The person named submitted an application for an allocation of entitlements from the 2006 Single Payment Scheme National Reserve under Category A. Category A caters for farmers who inherit, lease or receive land free of charge or for a nominal amount from a farmer who had retired or died by 16 May, 2005 and where the land was leased out by the original owner during the reference period 2000 to 2002.

The person named has been deemed unsuccessful under this category as the land on which the application was based was leased out by the applicant during the reference period 2000 to 2002 and not by the original owner as required by the conditions governing the National Reserve. A letter outlining my Department's decision issued to the person named on the 7th June, 2007.

320. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason entitlements were not transferred to persons (details supplied) in County Galway when they purchased a farm; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28526/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): An application was received on 4 May 2007 from the persons named requesting a transfer of entitlements from a third party. As the transfer application was incomplete, a copy of the application was returned to the third party for completion with a request that a copy of the Sale Agreement be also forwarded. These were subsequently received. A further letter was issued to the persons named requesting the completion of essential details on the application form and the provision of documentary evidence to substantiate their claim to the 'new entrant' status.

It was also indicated that the persons named had failed to submit a Single Payment Application under the 2007 Scheme year and they were advised to make contact with the Single Payment Section of my Department in Portlaoise in this regard. To date no reply has been received. Once the completed application form to transfer the entitlements is returned along with the relevant documentation, the transfer application will be processed without delay.

Fisheries Protection.

321. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the progress made in dealing with the bonamia ostrea out-

[Deputy Joe McHugh.]

break in Lough Swilly; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28533/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Lough Swilly lost its approved zone status for the disease *Bonamia ostrea* in late 2006 following the isolation of the parasite in a sample taken as part of the routine monitoring program. Once the disease has been introduced to an area it has proved difficult to eradicate it. The Marine Institute together with the Department issued guidelines for containing the *Bonamia ostrea* outbreak in Lough Swilly when it occurred. These guidelines are still in place and need to be maintained in an effort to restrict any further spread of the parasite.

In addition, the Marine Institute has been carrying out an Epidemiological investigation to determine how the outbreak may have occurred and to investigate whether the parasite may have been introduced to any other areas prior to its detection in Lough Swilly. The report from this investigation is currently being compiled and is due to be submitted to the EU over the coming weeks. While *Bonamia ostrea* can contribute to higher mortalities in oyster beds, it is not harmful to human health and consequently does not have any adverse effect on sales of product from the point of view of the consumer.

322. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the section of her Department responsible for the Swilly wild oyster fishery; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28535/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Lough Swilly Wild Oyster Fishery is regulated by the issue of oyster fishing licences by the Northern Regional Fishery Board on an annual basis. The Central and Regional Fisheries Boards come under the aegis of the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. I understand from the Northern Regional Fishery Board, however, that there are currently 27 such licences issued.

An application by the Lough Swilly Wild Oyster Development Association for an aquaculture licence under the Fisheries (Amendment) Act, 1997 in respect of some of the wild oyster beds in Lough Swilly is under consideration by my Department. The areas sought by the Association overlap in part with areas already licensed by the Department for mussel cultivation. This is a serious complicating factor in the orderly licensing of the area in question and is the subject of extensive ongoing examination by officials in the Aquaculture Licensing Section of my Department.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme.

323. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason a person (details supplied) in County Galway was refused payment of the REP scheme in 2006; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28565/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Following an on farm inspection in September 2006, the person named was notified that as a result of the findings of the inspection there would be a penalty imposed. He appealed the decision locally, but had not been notified of the outcome at the time of his death or of his right of further appeal to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office. In these circumstances my Department will release the payment without deduction of penalty.

Grant Payments.

324. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan will be awarded area aid and single entitlement payment due in September or October 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28599/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 25 April 2007. The case was selected for satellite inspection, which is now complete. The 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme and the full payment under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme issued on 5 and 8 November 2007 respectively.

Farm Improvement Scheme.

325. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason for the ending of the farm improvement scheme; the estimated cost of the scheme to date; the anticipated cost of keeping the scheme open for a further six months; the proposals she has to extend or replace this scheme in the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28600/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Farm Improvement Scheme was launched by my Department in July 2007 with a funding provision of €79 million as agreed under the partnership agreement, Towards 2016. As applications under the Scheme have reached this level of funding, I have announced that the Scheme will close to new applications for now. As applications received under the Scheme are being processed by my Department, payments will be issuing to farmers under the Scheme in respect of completed investment works by farmers.

I have no plans at present to reopen the Scheme. However, the partnership agreement referred to above provides for a review of its terms in 2008 which will no doubt include consideration of the possible reopening of the Scheme concerned and the terms thereof.

Harbours and Piers.

326. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food her plans to develop Killybegs Harbour with special emphasis on fishing, commercial tourism and recreational activities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28663/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): A major marketing initiative is underway at present, which aims to identify opportunities to attract new business for Killybegs Harbour from a number of perspectives including, fishing, local industry, offshore, commercial traffic and tourism. In addition to this, five-year Business Plans for each of the six Fishery Harbour Centres around the country are currently being developed. The Killybegs Business Plan will establish business development priorities, provide a road map to maximise fishing and fish processing opportunities, develop and promote marine related activities and leisure and amenity facilities. Any decision on the future development of Killybegs Harbour will be taken with due consideration to the outcome of the above.

327. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there are plans to reinstate the border inspection post at Killybegs Harbour, County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28664/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Border Inspection Posts are the official portals for foods of Third Country origin into the European Community. On taking over responsibility for Fisheries, I asked the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) to set out for me the requirements that would have to be met to establish a Border Inspection Post at Killybegs. The SFPA have now given me an overview of the infrastructural and staffing requirements which would be required to establish and get European Commission, DG SANCO (FVO), approval for a new Border Inspection Post.

I am currently considering how to have the necessary independent assessment of the business case for the establishment of a Border Inspection Post at Killybegs completed and will consider the matter further on completion of the business case.

Grant Payments.

328. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

when a person (details supplied) in County Cavan will be granted their single farm payment and REP scheme for 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28707/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The position is that an application under the Single Payment Scheme/ Disadvantaged Area Scheme was received from the person named on the 11th April 2007. As part of the control procedures under EU legislation, governing these Schemes the application was selected for and was the subject of a ground eligibility and cross-compliance inspection. The inspection commenced on the 30/10/2007. The details of the inspection are still being considered and the findings will be communicated to the person named within 14 days of the inspection. Until the inspection process is complete no payment can be made.

If the person named is not satisfied with the result of the inspection, they may seek a review by contacting her Local Office. They also have the right to appeal the outcome of any such review to the Independent Agriculture Appeals Office. An application for REPS payment (Form 1C) was received on 13 August 2007 and has been processed. Payment will issue within the next two weeks.

329. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Cavan will receive their area aid and single payment for 2006 and their single farm payment for 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28708/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): An application under the 2007 Single Payment Scheme/ Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 27th April 2007. As part of the control procedures under EU legislation, governing these Schemes, the application was selected for and was the subject of a ground eligibility and cross-compliance inspection. The details of the inspection are still being considered and the findings will be communicated shortly to the person named. Until the inspection process is complete no payment can be made.

If the person named is not satisfied with the result of the inspection, he may seek a review by contacting his Local Office. He also has the right to appeal the outcome of any such review to the Independent Agriculture Appeals Office. In relation to 2006, as stated in reply to a previous question, the application cannot be processed until documentation requested from the person named is submitted to the inspecting officer.

330. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Cavan will receive their area aid and single farm pay-

[Deputy Seymour Crawford.]

ment for 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28709/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): An application under the Single Payment Scheme /Disadvantaged Areas Compensatory Allowance Scheme was received from the person named on 15 May 2007. As part of the control procedures under EU legislation, governing these Schemes, the application was selected for and was the subject of a ground eligibility and cross-compliance inspection. The details of the inspection are still being considered and the findings will be communicated shortly to the person named. Until the inspection process is complete no payment can be made. If the person named is not satisfied with the result of the inspection, he may seek a review by contacting his Local Office. He also has the right to appeal the outcome of any such review to the Independent Agriculture Appeals Office.

Farm Improvement Scheme.

331. **Deputy P. J. Sheehan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the number of applications and the amount applied for in grants under the farm improvement grants scheme received by each of the offices of her Department by 31 October 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28724/07]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The number of applications received in each county under the Farm Improvement Scheme prior to its suspension for new applications on 31 October 2007 is shown in the table.

County	Number of Applications
Carlow	176
Cavan	675
Clare	510
Cork	1,863
Donegal	931
Dublin	29
Galway	850
Kerry	875
Kildare	133
Kilkenny	519
Laois	336
Leitrim	375
Limerick	368
Longford	218
Louth	209
Mayo	740
Meath	272
Monaghan	362
Offaly	282
Roscommon	484

County	Number of Applications
Sligo	255
Tipperary	895
Waterford	487
Westmeath	274
Wexford	295
Wicklow	262
Total	12,675

Processing of these grant applications is continuing within my Department and it is not possible at this stage to provide a final figure as to the financial commitment, in terms of grant-aid, represented by these applications.

Schools Building Projects.

332. **Deputy Michael Kennedy** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position regarding the construction of a sports and recreation centre on lands at a school (details supplied) in County Dublin; the reason for delays; if the VEC is aware of the situation; when the project will commence and is expected to be completed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28065/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The project to which the Deputy refers is a completely new school planned for the Fingal area. As the Deputy will be aware, the Department been working for some time with Fingal County Council on the acquisition of sites to enable new schools to open throughout its area of functionality in the coming years.

The ability of the Department to open these schools is contingent on the sites being acquired by the local authority in accordance with its agreement with my Department. My Department is encouraged by the Council's recent positive statement in relation to the progress being made in this regard. The schools will be provided in areas to meet the needs arising from the local authority's own County Development Plan and its various Local Area Development Plans.

The Deputy will appreciate that due to commercial sensitivities, I cannot comment on specific sites at this time, however, I can assure the Deputy that the Department will continue to work very closely with Fingal County Council to meet the needs of the Fingal area for next year and beyond. A timescale for the delivery of the school to which the Deputy refers can only be set when the land has been acquired, however, I can confirm, that it is the intention to provide shared community facilities on the site.

Bullying in Schools.

333. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science the practical ways

of assisting teachers against bullying and sexual harassment from pupils particularly in second level schools. [28054/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): My Department has issued guidelines to the Management Authorities of second level schools on meeting their obligations under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act to ensure the safety and health of their employees. As in other workplaces, staff in second level schools may be victims of bullying or violent or intimidating behaviour. While it may not be possible to prevent all such incidents, effective school policies concerning a range of issues can have a positive effect in reducing the risk of such incidents occurring and to minimise their consequences. The close interaction of the school management with staff and parents in developing effective school policies on school discipline, bullying and health and safety contributes to a positive school environment where mutual respect, co-operation and natural justice are accepted features of the school community by all.

School Management Authorities are responsible for ensuring that a fair and efficient code of behaviour, encompassing rules, sanctions and procedures, is drawn up and applied in the school. The Code should be developed by the Principal and the staff in consultation with parents and approved by the School Management Authority. Parents should be circularised regarding the Code when it is finalised.

This Code should have as its aim the maintenance of desirable standards of behaviour, particularly in fostering understanding and co-operation between teachers, pupils and parents in helping schools to adapt to the needs of its students while establishing the basis for responsible actions by its students and observing the principles of natural justice. Any sanction imposed on a pupil should be in accordance with the Code of Discipline. Procedures for suspending pupils should be clearly set out in the school's Code of Discipline and should be adhered to. Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a teacher is regarded as serious or gross misbehaviour and may warrant suspension.

The National Educational Welfare Board is currently working on revised Guidelines for Developing School Codes of Behaviour. This work is nearing completion and I expect that the revised Guidelines will be available shortly. The Health and Safety Authority has also issued a Code of Practice on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying. It defines workplace bullying as repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reason-

ably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but as a once off incident is not considered to be bullying.

As a supportive resource, teachers can now access an Employee Assistance Service (EAS) specifically tailored to meet their particular needs. The EAS now available to teachers throughout the country is designed to support the health and well-being of teachers which will in turn positively affect work quality and performance. The service will incorporate confidential counselling on issues such as health, relationships, addictions, bereavement, stress, conflict, critical incident and trauma.

Services include, single session or short term structured telephone counselling, face to face short term confidential counselling as well as critical incident debriefing. These services are intended to assist individual teachers and school communities to increase psychological resilience, improve communication, develop positive work relationships and enhance well-being.

Driving Tests.

334. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of qualified driving instructors who are employed at second level to prepare students for their driver theory test; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28058/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): My Department does not fund the employment of driving instructors in schools, and there are no plans to provide driving lessons as part of the road safety programmes being implemented in schools. A Road Safety programme for use in Transition Year has been developed by the Road safety Authority in collaboration with my Department, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Second Level Support Service. It is currently being piloted in schools. The programme provides a structured approach towards the development of responsible attitudes towards road safety and driver education and builds on the knowledge gained from current Social Personal and Health Education programmes (SPHE). Covering areas such as seatbelt use, hazard perception and driver attitudes towards alcohol and drug use the Transition Year Road Safety Programme will also prepare students for the Driver Theory Test.

The Transition Year Road Safety Programme will be delivered by teachers in the classroom. Theory test preparation will take place in the form of review questions relevant to the lesson at the end of each class which will be supported by a DVD resource based on commercially available preparation material. The Road Safety Authority

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

has also obtained input from the Gardaí, NCT centres and Bus Eireann in the delivery of this programme.

Schools Building Projects.

335. **Deputy Michael Kennedy** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position regarding the provision of both a primary and secondary school at Castlelands in Balbriggan; if her Department has entered into negotiations with Fingal County Council for land; the proposed size of both schools; when the project is due to commence and finish; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28063/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Department been working for some time with Fingal County Council on the acquisition of sites to enable new schools to open throughout its area of functionality in 2008. The ability of the Department to open these schools next September is contingent on the sites being acquired very soon. The Department is encouraged by the Council's recent positive statement in relation to the progress being made in this regard. The schools themselves will be provided in areas to meet the needs arising from the local authority's own County Development Plan and its various Local Area Development Plans.

The Deputy will appreciate that due to commercial sensitivities, I cannot comment on specific sites at this time, however, I can assure the Deputy that the Department will continue to work very closely with Fingal County Council to meet the needs of the Fingal area for next year and beyond.

Higher Education Grants.

336. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of people applying for research grants for post-graduate studies for the years 2004, 2005 and 2006 and the college and course involved. [28084/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): My Department provides funding to the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences, Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology and the Technological Sector Research programme for individual post graduate research applications. The number of applications, by institution, under the post graduate research schemes operated by these bodies for the years 2004, 2005 and 2006 is given in the table. The breakdown of applications by institutional course is not readily available.

IRCSET 2004-2006 Post Graduate Applications for funding by HEI

2004 Calls 1 & 2

Institution	Applied
DIT	4
DIAS	3
DCU	70
GMIT	2
IT Blanchardstown	4
IT Carlow	4
IT Cork	9
IT Sligo	3
IT Tallaght	6
IT Tralee	1
Limerick IT	5
NUI Galway	98
NUI Maynooth	31
RCSI	6
TCD	123
UCC	116
UCD	135
UL	82
WIT	14
Total	716

2005 1st Call

Institute	Applications
Athlone IT	1
Blanchardstown IT	1
IT Carlow	3
CIT	2
DCU	52
DIAS	4
DIT	4
Dundalk IT	1
GMIT	1
IT Tallaght	3
IT Sligo	2
NCI	1
NUI Galway	60
NUI Maynooth	28
RCSI	6
TCD	75
UCC	62
UCD	107
UL	66
WIT	2
Total	481

2005 2nd Call

Institution	Applied
Athlone IT	1
Cork IT	2
DCU	22
DIAS	2
DIT	3
GMIT	1
Blanchardstown IT	1
Carlow IT	1
Letterkenny IT	1
RCSI	2
NUIG	34
NUIM	10
TCD	42
UL	35
UCC	33
UCD	52
WIT	2
Total	244

2006 2nd Call

Institution	Applied
Athlone IT	0
Blanchardstown IT	1
IT Carlow	5
CIT	3
DCU	38
DIAS	2
DIT	8
Dundalk IT	0
GMIT	3
IT Tallaght	0
IT Tralee	0
IT Sligo	0
NCI	0
NUI Galway	43
NUI Maynooth	5
RCSI	8
TCD	62
UCC	64
UCD	62
UL	43
WIT	2
Total	349

First Call, 2006 Data

Institution	Applied
Athlone IT	0
Blanchardstown IT	0
IT Carlow	4
CIT	10
DCU	57
DIAS	0
DIT	7
Dundalk IT	2
GMIT	2
IT Tallaght	6
IT Tralee	2
IT Sligo	0
NCI	2
NUI Galway	64
NUI Maynooth	23
RCSI	3
TCD	88
UCC	84
UCD	65
UL	46
WIT	5
Total	470

In-service Training.

337. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science the reason special needs assistants are not permitted to go on training courses for the purpose of establishing behavioural support classes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28092/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): As part of its work at whole school, customised and Behaviour Support Classroom levels, the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) conducts in-school and out of school continuous professional development (CPD) courses which focus on systemic behaviour improvement in schools.

To date, in-school CPD has mainly concentrated on upskilling staff in the areas of low level disruption and prevention and de-escalation techniques for high level disruption. Out of school CPD has been organised for Behaviour Support Classroom staff only and has concentrated on all aspects of the prevention and addressing of challenging behaviour in the classroom and around the school. A range of Behaviour Support Classroom (BSC) personnel attend CPD out of school training courses. Where special needs assistants work in Behaviour Support Classrooms, they are automatically included in all BSC training.

School Staffing.

338. **Deputy Edward O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Science if an extra teacher will be put in place at a school (details supplied) in County Cork to avoid the necessity for split classes. [28108/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The mainstream staffing of a primary school is determined by reference to the enrolment of the school on 30th September of the previous school year. The actual number of mainstream posts sanctioned is determined by reference to a staffing schedule which is issued annually to all primary schools.

According to data submitted to the Department by the Board of Management of the school referred to by the Deputy, the enrolment in the school on 30th September 2006 was 196 pupils. In accordance with the staffing schedule (Circular 0020/2007), which is available on the Department’s website at www.education.ie and a hard copy of which has issued to all primary schools, the mainstream staffing in the school for the 2007/08 school year is a Principal and 7 mainstream class teachers. The school also has the services of 3 Permanent Learning Support/Resource Posts.

According to further data submitted to the Department by the Board of Management of the school, the enrolment in the school on 30th September 2007 was 192 pupils. The staffing of the school for the 2008/2009 school year will be based on this figure and on the new staffing schedule for the 2008/09 school year which will issue from my Department early in 2008. An independent appeal board is now in place to decide on any appeals on mainstream staffing in primary schools. Details of the appeal procedure are outlined in Department Circular 0024/2007 which is available on my Department’s website. The appeal board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

School Transport.

339. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Science if children of parents who are minded since infancy in a different primary school catchment area are entitled to school transport to a primary school that is not in their local area but situated in the area in which the child minder lives; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28118/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey): Under the terms of my Department’s Primary School Transport Scheme, pupils who reside 3.2 kilometres or more from, and are attending, their nearest suitable national school, as determined by my Department, are eligible for free school trans-

port. Pupils not attending their nearest national school may avail of concessionary fare-paying transport to another school, provided: (a) the written agreement of the board of management of the nearest school is secured; (b) there are spare seats available on the bus; and (c) no extra State cost is incurred by extending or re-routing the service.

Parents should liaise with their local Bus Éireann office to determine their children’s eligibility or to establish whether their children may avail of fare-paying transport on the foregoing terms.

Institutes of Technology.

340. **Deputy Brian O’Shea** asked the Minister for Education and Science if the consideration of a report (details supplied) on the submission of Waterford Institute of Technology for upgrading to university status will be concluded by the end of 2007, the end of 2008 or the end of 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28129/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Earlier this year the person referred to by the Deputy was asked to provide preliminary advice on the merits of the submission by WIT, having regard to; (i) the national strategy for the development of Irish higher education, (ii) implications for regional development in the South-East in the context of the National Spatial Strategy and (iii) any likely implications for the overall structure of higher education in Ireland. This report is currently under consideration.

Aside from the very detailed statutory review process that is required in progressing an application, there are also significant wider issues that need to be considered in advance of any possible statutory review. For example, there have been important wider policy developments in the overall higher education sector that are relevant in this context. In particular, it is important that account be taken of the very significant recent changes in the overall legislative framework governing Irish higher education, with the commencement of the new Institutes of Technology Act 2006 on 1st February 2007, as well as wider Government policy on foot of the review of Irish higher education carried out by the OECD in 2004, the broad thrust of which was endorsed by the Government.

I am cognisant of the strong support that has been built in the south east region around the application from Waterford IT for university status. However, wider policy developments must also be central to the consideration of the appropriate next steps in relation to the application. WIT’s application is currently being carefully

assessed in that broad context and the work will be completed as quickly as possible.

School Transport.

341. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Education and Science if there is an accident and if the child of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo is hurt, will her Department take full responsibility for it in view of the fact the child has been prevented from using a booster seat on the school bus as per Department regulations. [28139/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey): I have already outlined to the Deputy in replies to previous Parliamentary Questions that the law in relation to the use of safety restraint systems in buses reflects the requirements as set down in the relevant EU Directives and that these Directives do not require the provision of such systems for children travelling on buses fitted with safety belts. I also pointed out that the law requires that occupants of buses who are 3 years of age or more must wear safety belts where they are fitted. Because all nominated buses operating within the school transport scheme are fitted with safety belts, all pupils travelling on these vehicles are obliged by law to wear the belts provided.

The Deputy can also be assured that the safety of children travelling on the school transport service is of paramount importance to my Department and Bus Éireann which operates the school transport scheme. Bus Éireann place special emphasis on safety and, to this end, have a wide range of checking procedures in place, in addition to statutory vehicle examinations, to ensure as far as reasonably possible that a safe and reliable service is delivered. An accident involving a school transport vehicle would have to be fully investigated, in the normal way, by the relevant authorities. I cannot comment on hypothetical circumstances. The stance taken by my Department would depend on all the circumstances of the particular case.

Special Educational Needs.

342. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Education and Science the reason a person (details supplied) was refused a laptop for their studies in view of their dyslexia and that the student has problems writing and spelling; the reason it was proposed that an Alpha Smart would be considered appropriate; if she will reconsider the request in view of the disadvantage this student suffers because of their dyslexia and the fact that they are studying for their leaving certificate in 2008; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28144/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): My Department provides for a scheme of grants towards the purchase of equipment for the use of students in second-level schools who have been diagnosed as having serious physical and/or communicative disabilities of a degree which makes ordinary communication through speech and/or writing impossible for them. The purpose of the grant-aid is to provide the students in question with equipment of direct educational benefit to them. Examples of such equipment include computers, word processors, tape recorders, software, etc.

The scheme is driven by applications from schools on behalf of individual students, as and when specific needs present. Following the establishment of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), all applications for assistive technology are submitted by school management to the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) with assigned responsibility for the school. The SENO examines applications and makes a recommendation to my Department.

In this case, the advice my Department has received is that the provision of a laptop computer is not warranted as the application does not meet the required criteria. Applications for assistive technology are only considered for those students with a Specific Learning Disability who are of average intelligence or higher and have a degree of learning disability specific to basic skills in reading, writing or mathematics, which places them at or below the 2nd percentile on suitable, standardised, norm-referenced tests. The score in this instance was above the 2nd percentile. I understand that the reason an alphasmart was suggested to the family was because it was regarded as a cheaper alternative in the event of their purchasing assistive technology from their own resources.

Ministerial Staff.

343. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Science the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by her Department on 1 November 2002; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28150/07]

344. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Science the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by her; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28165/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 343 and 344 together.

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Staff have been appointed to the Office of the Minister for Education and Science in the following posts:

- 1 Special Advisor (Principal Officer Scale) — Ms. Averil Power — current salary €92,429
- 1 Personal Assistant (Higher Executive Officer Scale) — Mr. Carl Gibney — current salary €52,379
- 1 Personal Secretary (Secretarial Assistant Scale) — Ms. Paula Power — current salary €26,799
- 1 Press Officer. (Assistant Principal Officer Scale) — Ms. Geraldine Butler — current salary €67,704. Ms. Butler is a Civil Servant.

The combined annual salaries of these staff amount to €239,311.

On 1st November 2002 the following political appointees were employed in my Department in respect of a Minister and Minister of State:

- 1 Special Advisor (Principal Officer Scale) — Mr. James Fegan — salary €73,277.36
- 2 Personal Assistants (Higher Executive Officer Scale) — Ms. Margaret Conway, Ms. Mary McNamara — salaries €38,896 each
- 2 Personal Secretaries (Secretarial Assistant Scale) — Ms. Una Grehan, Ms. Mairead Collins — salaries €29,317.33 and €32,249.06 respectively
- 1 Press Officer (Higher Executive Officer Scale) — Ms. Grace Cappock — salary €37,248

The combined annual salaries of these staff at 1st November 2002 amounted to €249,883.75.

The Deputy should note that the number of non-civil servant political appointees on my staff is three, compared to five political appointees on the staff of the Minister for Education 1994 — 97. The Minister of State based in my Department from 1995 — 97 also had their own special adviser.

Schools Building Projects.

345. **Deputy Niall Blaney** asked the Minister for Education and Science if she will assist in progressing a proposed building project for a school (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28181/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The building project for the School referred to by the Deputy is at an early stage of architectural planning. The School authorities have recently been requested to submit an

addendum to the original stage 2 report (developed sketch scheme). When this information is received in my Department it will be evaluated by my Department's technical team. Progression of all building projects will be considered in the context of my Department's multi-annual Schools Building and Modernisation programme.

Higher Education Grants.

346. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Education and Science if she will reconsider a decision to allow a grant to be awarded to a person (details supplied) in County Mayo and the fees in view of the financial circumstances of this person. [28186/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): My Department funds four maintenance grant schemes for third level and further education students. These are the Higher Education Grants (HEG) Scheme, the Vocational Education Committees' (VEC) Scholarships Scheme, the Third Level Maintenance Grants Scheme for Trainees and the Maintenance Grants Scheme for Students attending Post Leaving Certificate Courses. The HEG Scheme is administered by the Local Authorities on behalf of my Department. The other three schemes are administered by the Vocational Education Committees.

Generally speaking, students who are entering approved courses for the first time are eligible for grants where they satisfy the relevant conditions as to age, residence, means, nationality and previous academic attainment. An approved third level course for the purpose of the HEG and the VEC Scholarship Schemes means a full-time undergraduate course of not less than two years duration and a full time postgraduate course of not less than one years duration pursued in an approved institution. The Schemes outline the respective courses which are approved for grant purposes.

The decision on eligibility for third level grants is a matter for the relevant local authority or VEC. These bodies do not refer individual applications to my Department except, in exceptional cases, where, for example, advice or instruction regarding a particular clause in the relevant scheme is desired. If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a maintenance grant, or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal to the relevant local authority or VEC.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by the relevant local authority or VEC, and remains of the view that the body has not interpreted the schemes correctly in his/her case, a letter outlining the position may be sent to my Department. Alternatively, as already indicated, the local authority or

VEC may, itself, in exceptional circumstances, seek clarification on issues from my Department.

Under the terms of my Departments Schemes, candidates who have previously pursued an undergraduate course approved for the purposes of the Higher Education Grants Scheme, the Vocational Education Committees' Scholarship Scheme or the Third Level Maintenance Grants Scheme for Trainees (formerly ESF Scheme) shall not receive a grant under this scheme until they have completed an equivalent period of study at undergraduate level, irrespective of whether or not a grant was paid previously. Similarly, tuition fees under the Free Fees Initiative, are not payable in respect of a second period of college attendance on a course at the same level.

School Transport.

347. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Education and Science the reason a child (details supplied) in County Kildare is not in receipt of a free bus pass; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28206/07]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey): The Transport Liaison Officer for County Kildare has confirmed that the pupil referred to by the Deputy, in the details supplied, has been issued with a school transport ticket.

Ministerial Responsibilities.

348. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the duties and responsibilities of the Minister of State with special responsibility for integration policy at her Department; the budget allocated to the same Minister of State; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28212/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Minister of State will be responsible for integration policy functions relating to the following:

Ensuring that the range of education policies across different areas of the Department and the bodies under its aegis take account of the need to integrate immigrants and their families, in particular in relation to

- Further development of policy in relation to the deployment of language support teachers for newcomers in schools
- Appropriate teaching materials, supports and advice for schools on how to meet the needs of newcomer children
- Development, in conjunction with other relevant Departments and agencies, of a national policy on the provision of English language education for adult newcomers.

- Implementation of the Department of Education and Science aspects of the National Action Plan against Racism
- Liaison with education partners management bodies, unions, parents, representatives of school principals) on newcomer issues
- Review of international developments and trends in relation to newcomers
- Development of appropriate linkages with the Department of Education in Northern Ireland on newcomer issues.
- Coordinating the work of the Department of Education and Science on the integration of newcomers with the related work of other relevant Departments and State Agencies.

To assist the Minister of State in his brief a new Integration Unit has been established. At present there is no dedicated budget allocation. However, significant funding is being provided across a number of sections to support students in primary and post primary schools for whom English is a second language and to assist schools to provide an inclusive intercultural environment. The resources available are outlined in a circular (53/2007) which was issued to all managerial authorities in May 2007.

Special Educational Needs.

349. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science if, in view of the fact that up to 18% of second level pupils are estimated to have special education needs, she will give effect to the recommendation in the National Council for Special Education implementation plan that a specific co-ordinator should be appointed to second level schools to carry out the varied tasks, including the co-ordination of individual education plans, in order to ensure the needs of those pupils are met; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28254/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): As the Deputy will be aware, a number of sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004 have been commenced, principally those establishing the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and those promoting an inclusive approach to the education of children with special needs. The National Council for Special Education was required by the legislation to advise on implementation of the Act. My Department has been examining the Council's advice, including that in regard to co-ordinators, and in this context has held a series of consultations with the education partners on implementation issues. Arising from this process my

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Department is developing proposals for the implementation of the EPSEN Act. It is hoped to complete this work shortly.

The sections of the EPSEN Act in respect of assessment and individual education plans (IEP) have not yet commenced. However, services continue to be provided on a non-statutory basis and my Department continues to provide for the allocation of additional resources through the Council to enhance the capacity of the education system to meet special educational needs. The Deputy may wish to note that in preparation for the statutory introduction of the individual education plan (IEP) process, the Council has published guidelines on the IEP process and a copy issued to all primary and post primary schools at the commencement of the 2006/2007 school year. These guidelines provide advice and assistance to schools, teachers and parents on devising and implementing individual education plans. It is the Council's intention that schools will use these guidelines to draw up school policies and procedures in relation to individual education plans in advance of the mandatory requirement for them to do so.

A further component of the preparation for the roll-out of the EPSEN Act in second level schools was the development of the "Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines" published by my Department's Inspectorate in June. These guidelines, which were circulated to all second level schools, advocate a whole-school approach to effectively meet the educational needs of special needs students. Practical advice and guidance are provided on the organisation and co-ordination of resources to maximise the support to each individual student.

Teachers' Remuneration.

350. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science if there are plans to bring teacher's salaries into line regardless of whether they achieved first, second or third class honours in their BA degrees; and if there is to be a limit on when the degree was awarded for teachers to benefit. [28260/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The issue raised by the Deputy is currently the subject of a claim from the Teacher Unions under the auspices of the Teachers' Conciliation Council. It would therefore not be appropriate for me to comment on the matter until the claim has been finalised.

Higher Education Grants.

351. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Education and Science the reason a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow who has

residency on the basis of their Irish born child and on the basis of the humanitarian ground that led to their arrival in this country is being denied a grant to finish their third level studies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28281/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): My Department funds four maintenance grant schemes for third level and further education students. These are the Higher Education Grants Scheme, the Vocational Education Committees' Scholarships Scheme, the Third Level Maintenance Grants Scheme for Trainees and the Maintenance Grants Scheme for Students attending Post Leaving Certificate Courses. The Higher Education Grants Scheme is administered by the Local Authorities. The other three schemes are administered by the Vocational Education Committees.

Under the terms of the maintenance grants scheme grant assistance is awarded to students who meet the prescribed conditions of funding including those which relate to nationality, residency, means and previous academic attainment.

The Nationality requirement as set out in the 2007 Grant schemes states:

Candidates must:

- hold E.U. Nationality; or
- have Official Refugee Status; or
- have been granted Humanitarian Leave to Remain in the State (prior to the Immigration Act 1999); or
- be a person in respect of whom the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform has granted permission to remain following a determination not to make a deportation order under section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999; or
- have permission to remain in the State by virtue of marriage to an Irish national residing in the State, or be the child of such person, not having EU nationality; or
- have permission to remain in the State by virtue of marriage to a national of another EU Member State who is residing in the State and who is or has been employed, or self-employed, in the State, or be the child of such a person, not having EU nationality; or
- be nationals of a member country of the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland.

A non-EU national who has been granted permission to remain in the State on the basis of an Irish born child does not comply with the above conditions and is ineligible for grant assistance under the nationality requirements of the

Schemes. Any extension to the scope of the maintenance grants schemes, can be considered only in the light of available resources and in the context of competing demands within the education sector.

Question No. 352 answered with Question No. 92.

School Staffing.

353. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position regarding the sanctioning of the retention of a resource teacher for a school (details supplied) in County Limerick. [28285/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I am pleased to confirm that in line with my Department's circular 0034/2007, the school in question has the minimum of 44 hours required to retain 2 learning support/resource (LS/RT) teaching posts for the 2007/2008 school year. A letter confirming this position issued to the school on 22nd August 2007.

Schools Amalgamation.

354. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Science when an amalgamation of schools to be known as Scoil Machellog will be constructed. [28286/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The school building project referred to by the Deputy is at an early stage of architectural planning. The school's Design Team is currently in the process of preparing a stage 1/2 submission (Site analysis and Outline Sketch Scheme). When this is received it will be evaluated by my Department's technical team. Progression of all projects, including this project, will be considered in the context of my Department's multi-annual School Building and Modernisation programme.

Decentralisation Programme.

355. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Science if, in relation to the proposed decentralisation for Mullingar, her Department has finalised its plans in this regard; if her Department will provide the necessary temporary accommodation in order to allow decentralisation to proceed immediately; if same will be proceeded with; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28379/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Under the Government's decentralisation programme, 300 posts from my Department's headquarters will decentralise to Mullingar, with a further 100 posts decentralising to Athlone. A site has been acquired for my

Department's new headquarters in Mullingar and tenders have been received by the Office of Public Works (OPW) for the provision of this accommodation. The accommodation will be procured as a Public Private Partnership project, using the design, build, finance and maintain model. It is currently envisaged that the decentralisation to Mullingar will take place in 2010.

No decision has been taken as to whether a number of posts will be located into temporary accommodation in Mullingar in advance of the full decentralisation of 300 posts into the new permanent accommodation. The issue will continue to be examined from time to time pending a decision.

The decentralisation of sections from Dublin to Athlone will take place next year, resulting in the relocation of 400 posts from Dublin into new permanent accommodation in Athlone and Mullingar over a period of approximately 2 years. As I have previously stated, the capacity of my Department to manage its business if this process is accelerated is a major consideration in deciding as to whether it is appropriate to relocate a number of posts into temporary accommodation in Mullingar in advance of the full move of 300 posts into the new permanent accommodation.

Higher Education Grants.

356. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Education and Science if Polish residents, resident and educated here, are entitled to grant support for third level colleges in Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28382/07]

357. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Education and Science the EU residents here who are entitled to grants for fees and other assistance for third level education in colleges in Ireland; the conditions that may be applicable; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28383/07]

358. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Education and Science if Romanian nationals legally resident and educated here are entitled to grant assistance for third level education; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28387/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 356 to 358, inclusive, together.

My Department funds three maintenance grant schemes for third level students which are administered by the Local Authorities and the Vocational Education Committees. These are the Higher Education Grants Scheme, the Vocational Education committees' Scholarship Scheme, the Third Level Maintenance Grants Scheme for

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Trainees and the Maintenance Grants Scheme for Students attending Post Leaving Certificate Courses. The Higher Education Grants Scheme is administered by the Local Authorities. The other three schemes are administered by the Vocational Education Committees. Under the terms of the maintenance grants schemes grant assistance is awarded to students who meet the prescribed conditions of funding including those which relate to age, residence, means, nationality and previous academic attainment.

The nationality requirement as set out in the 2007 Grant Schemes states: Candidates must:—

- hold E.U. Nationality; or
- have Official Refugee Status; or
- have been granted Humanitarian Leave to Remain in the State (prior to the Immigration Act 1999); or
- be a person in respect of whom the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform has granted permission to remain following a determination not to make a deportation order under section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999; or
- have permission to remain in the State by virtue of marriage to an Irish national residing in the State, or be the child of such person, not having EU nationality; or
- have permission to remain in the State by virtue of marriage to a national of another EU Member State who is residing in the State and who is or has been employed, or self-employed, in the State, or be the child of such a person, not having EU nationality; or
- be nationals of a member country of the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland.

Under the Residency requirement of the Schemes, the candidates' parents/guardians, or, in the case of an independent mature candidate, the candidate himself/herself must have been resident in the State from 1st October of the year prior to entry to an approved course. The assessing authorities do, however, have discretion to waive this requirement in exceptional cases.

Special Educational Needs.

359. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Science if her Department will provide the extra resources needed which will allow a person (details supplied) to stay on in a special needs school when they reach 18 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28388/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I wish to advise the Deputy that special schools funded by my Department are intended to cater for children and young persons with special educational needs from 4 years until the end of the school year in which they reach their 18th year. At that point, the Department of Health and Children/Health Service Executive assumes direct responsibility for young adults with special educational needs who are over 18 years. My Department, at that stage may allocate resources towards an education component of such provision.

It is expected that a school will have been liaising with the health authorities during the final year of a young person's attendance in school to ensure the young person's successful transition to adult services by the time s/he reaches age 18 or at the end of the school year following their 18th birthday.

Schools Refurbishment.

360. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science if she will confirm that schools are asked to pay the cost of installation and removal of temporary classrooms and pre-fabs when her Department sanctions funding for such facilities; the type of cost incurred; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28389/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Where schools are grant assisted by my Department for the provision of rented temporary classrooms, the rental cost and associated works, including installation and removal, is grant-aided at a rate of 75%, for schools without full recognition, and at 95%, for fully recognised schools. Special Schools are funded at 100% of the total cost. Where the local contribution for a school exceeds €3,175 for expenditure incurred in the financial year January to December, the rental payment would be grant aided at a rate of 100%. Where the temporary accommodation is purchased by my Department for use by a school there is no cost to the school either in relation to the temporary structure or associated costs for the installation or removal of the structure.

Pre-school Services.

361. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the estimated cost per year of providing free pre-school places for all children aged three to five. [28404/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The cost of providing free pre-school places for all children aged three to five is dependent on a number of factors including the type of model proposed. Pre-school services operate across a wide range of curricular philosophical bases, e.g., Montessori, Steiner,

High/Scope. Other approaches include the Reggio Emilio approach. Any estimated costing would depend on the models of intervention envisaged and assumptions about different variables within those models. As these haven't been specified, it isn't possible to provide a costing as requested.

I would, however, like to point out while the mandatory school attendance age is 6, children from the age of 4 can enrol in primary schools. My Department's last statistical report showed that 45.5% of 4 year olds and 99% of 5 year olds are enrolled in primary schools. There is data available on how the Primary Sector is funded if the Deputy wishes to pursue this further.

Schools Refurbishment.

362. **Deputy Margaret Conlon** asked the Minister for Education and Science the applications received from County Monaghan schools for capital grants and under the summer works scheme 2008; when she expects the applications to be processed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28409/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The number of building projects under consideration can change on a day to day basis as new applications are received and existing applications are progressed in my Department. These projects are assessed and prioritised in accordance with the prioritisation criteria agreed with the Education Partners. The closing date for the Summer Works Scheme 2008 was 28th September 2007. Decisions on the Scheme will be made later in the year.

363. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Education and Science the reason a school (details supplied) in County Meath has had capital funding withdrawn; if she will review this decision with the view to reinstating this funding; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28451/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The tender report for the school referred to by the Deputy is under examination in my Department at present. The school's Board of Management will be kept advised of developments when the examination is complete.

Schools Building Projects.

364. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Science when the construction of a new primary school (details supplied) in County Limerick will commence. [28493/07]

382. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position regarding

a school building project (details supplied) in County Limerick. [28655/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 364 and 382 together.

The building project for the school referred to by the Deputies is at an early stage of Architectural Planning. The stage 3 submission is currently under review in my Department. The school's Board of Management will be kept advised of developments when this examination is complete. The progression of all large scale building projects from initial design stage through to construction phase, including this project, is considered on an on-going basis in the context of my Department's Multi-Annual School Building and Modernisation Programme.

Higher Education Grants.

365. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Science if in respect of an application by a person (details supplied) in County Mayo, a precedent exists for assistance under the higher education grant scheme to persons of similar circumstance; her views on changing the nature of the conditions of the scheme to cater for applicants in these circumstances; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28504/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Under the terms of my Department's maintenance grant schemes, candidates who have previously pursued an undergraduate course approved for the purposes of the Higher Education Grants Scheme, the Vocational Education Committees' Scholarship Scheme or the Third Level Maintenance Grants Scheme for Trainees (formerly ESF Scheme) shall not receive a grant under the grant schemes until they have completed an equivalent period of study at undergraduate level, irrespective of whether or not a grant was paid previously. Similarly, tuition fees under the Free Fees Initiative are not payable in respect of a second period of college attendance on a course at the same level. These provisions can only be waived in exceptional circumstances, such as certified serious illness.

My Department understands, from the information provided by the Deputy, that the candidate referred to has previously pursued an undergraduate course, in Hotel Management, without obtaining a terminal qualification, and is now pursuing first year of a second undergraduate course, in nursing. Unfortunately, the candidate will be ineligible for funding until she has completed an equivalent period of study on the current course. When the equivalent period of study is completed the candidate may become eligible

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

to apply, and be assessed, for funding for the current undergraduate course.

Schools Refurbishment.

366. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position regarding planned refurbishment work and a new building for a school (details supplied) in County Cork. [28510/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): A site to facilitate the proposed extension project to the school referred to by the Deputy has been independently valued. This valuation is under consideration by Officials in School Planning Section of the Department. The further progression of the project will be considered in the context of the multi-annual School Building and Modernisation programme.

367. **Deputy Peter Power** asked the Minister for Education and Science if she will grant funding to a school (details supplied) in County Limerick for an enhanced security system following disturbances in the area. [28531/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): An application for grant-aid to improve the security system has recently been received from the school referred to by the Deputy. This application is under examination in my Department at present and the school management will be informed of the decision as soon as possible.

Special Educational Needs.

368. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Science if she will immediately approve an increase in the resource teaching hours for a pupil (details supplied) in County Kilkenny in view of the recent report submitted to her Department by the senior speech and language therapist in the Health Service Executive, Kilkenny in response to her reply to Parliamentary Question No. 408 of 3 July 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28543/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): As the Deputy will be aware, the National Council for Special Education is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENO), for allocating resource teachers and special needs assistants to schools to support children with special needs.

The needs of the child in question were considered by the Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENO) and the child was assessed as having a mild general learning difficulty. In the opinion of the SENOs the needs of this child did not warrant additional hours being given to the

school. Any additional help this child requires would have to be sourced from the schools general allocation. General allocation is the term applied to resource hours given to all schools, based on the school size, for the support of children with mild learning difficulties.

The NCSE will review a decision taken by a Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) on foot of a request from a school or parents/guardians, when accompanied by relevant additional information, which may not have been to hand at the time of the decision. The NCSE has outlined this process in its Circular 01/05.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme.

369. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Education and Science when a review of the travel and meal allowances for VTOS students will be carried out in view of the fact that these have not been reviewed for ten years and that prices have risen noticeably in that time; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28545/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) is a second — chance education initiative which is funded by my Department for unemployed persons who are at least 21 years of age and in receipt of certain social welfare payments for at least six months. It is operated through the Vocational Education Committees. The aim of the Scheme is to give unemployed people education and training opportunities which will develop and prepare them to go into paid employment, or on to further education opportunities leading to paid employment.

A training allowance is paid by the VECs to students who previously drew unemployment benefit or assistance. The student ceases to receive an unemployment payment and, instead, receives a VTOS training allowance at a rate equivalent to the maximum rate of unemployment benefit, plus a payment for an adult or child dependant, if appropriate. VTOS students also retain their social welfare secondary benefits.

The allowances for VTOS students for meals and travel referred to in the question are equivalent to those paid to participants on FÁS training courses. VTOS students may be entitled to a travel allowance if they reside more than 3 miles from a centre. These allowances are increased periodically in line with increases in FÁS rates. The current rates are in operation since 2002. There are no plans to increase them in the near future.

School Enrolments.

370. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Mini-

ster for Education and Science the situation regarding admission to second level schools; and the way families should deal with refusals even though their children attended the feeder primary school on the campus. [28549/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Enrolment in individual schools is the responsibility of the managerial authority of those schools and my Department does not seek to intervene in decisions made by schools in such matters. My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places. This may result, however, in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

It is the responsibility of the managerial authorities of schools that are not in a position to admit all pupils seeking entry to implement an enrolment policy in accordance with the Education Act. In this regard a board of management may find it necessary to restrict enrolment to children from a particular area or a particular age group or, occasionally, on the basis of some other criterion. It is not unusual for some second-level schools to prioritise named feeder schools in their admissions policies. This often reflects long standing connections between certain schools.

However, in formulating an admissions policy a school must ensure it is lawful. In particular, it must act in accordance with Section 7 of the Equal Status Act 2000 which, subject to very limited exceptions, prohibits schools from discriminating against people in relation to a number of matters including the admission of a pupil to the school. Currently, under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, parents of a student who has been refused enrolment in a school may appeal that decision to the Secretary General of my Department where an appeal is upheld the Secretary General is empowered to direct the school to enrol the student.

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. The Welfare Board has indicated that it will treat children for whom an appeal under Section 29 has been unsuccessful as priority cases in offering such assistance. The NEWB can be contacted at National Educational Welfare Board, National Headquarters, 16-22 Green Street, Dublin 7 or by telephone at 01-8738700.

Schools Building Projects.

371. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Science the precise date the construction of a new six classroom primary school building at Loughagar, Mullingar, County Westmeath, will be allowed commence; if she will

ensure that same which is ready to commence will not be subject to any delay whatsoever; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28550/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The tender report for the school referred to by the Deputy is under examination in my Department at present. The school's Board of Management will be kept advised of developments when the examination is complete.

372. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Science the nature of other reports being put before her for consideration in relation to the provision of a new eight classroom school building at Clonmellon, County Westmeath; the reason this important and necessary educational infrastructural facility is being delayed, when it has progressed through all stages, and in effect whereby the board of management and all partners involved were ready to commence construction; if same will be allowed to proceed immediately without further obstacle or impediment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28551/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The tender report for the school referred to by the Deputy is under examination in my Department at present. The school's Board of Management will be kept advised of developments when the examination is complete.

Irish Language.

373. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the progress made in ensuring that relevant third level colleges and voluntary organisations for Irish will be asked to provide improvement courses in spoken Irish for teachers as announced on 11 March 2007. [28578/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): As part of new measures aimed at improving outcomes in Irish language learning and proficiency, a subject-specific support service for Irish has been established. The service forms part of the Second Level Support Service (SLSS) which provides programme and subject specific curricular support, and support for teaching and learning generally in second-level schools.

The support service for Irish has been designed to provide professional development support to second-level teachers of Irish generally and support for the teaching and learning of all aspects of the curriculum. One of the primary objectives of the service is to support the use of Gaeilge as a communicative language in schools and classrooms.

The service is staffed by a dedicated team of professionals led by a National Coordinator and a team of six regionally based development

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

officers. The team is managed by the Steering Committee of the SLSS and its work is directed by a professional advisory group which includes representatives of my Department, the State Examinations Commission, An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta, Foras na Gaeilge and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

To date the service has concentrated on the induction of team members and the preparation of seminars for teachers of First Year Irish. 54 seminars have been planned nationally for Term One. It is hoped that two teachers of First Year Irish from all second-level schools will have had access to these seminars by the end of Term Two of the current school year. It is also intended to offer a targeted seminar to teachers of First Year Irish in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools in the second term.

The support service has also been undertaking an audit of the professional development needs of the teachers with whom it has been working and this will inform its work into the future. The service will shortly be looking at ways to make courses available to support teachers who wish to upskill themselves in the spoken language.

A co-ordinating committee, Coiste Comhordaithe na Gaeilge, has also been established to advise on co-operative elements of the overall work to be carried out on the promotion of the Irish language within the education system. The committee is comprised of representatives from An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), Údarás na Gaeilge and Foras na Gaeilge. The committee has held a number of meetings to date.

Vocational Education Committees.

374. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the responsibilities of the various VEC's in the State under the Freedom of Information Act 1997. [28579/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): At present Vocational Education Committees do not come within the ambit of the Freedom of Information Acts. However, the Government has decided that the provisions of the Freedom of Information Acts should be extended to VECs. Consultations involving officials of my Department and the Irish Vocational Education Association have been initiated by the Department of Finance with a view to setting a date for the inclusion of Vocational Education Committees and the making of regulations to give effect to the Government decision in that regard.

Educational Disadvantage.

375. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister

for Education and Science if he will grant full funding for a full-time home-school liaison officer for a school (details supplied) in County Louth. [28580/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan for educational inclusion provides for a standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage and a new integrated School Support Programme (SSP). including. DEIS also brings together and builds upon a number of existing interventions in schools with a concentrated level of disadvantage, including the provision of Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) services.

The process of identifying schools for participation in DEIS was managed by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) on behalf of my Department and supported by quality assurance work co-ordinated through the Department's regional offices and the Inspectorate. 673 primary and 203 post primary schools were invited to participate in DEIS.

A review mechanism was put in place to address the concerns of schools that did not qualify for inclusion in DEIS but regarded themselves as having a level of disadvantage which was of a scale sufficient to warrant their inclusion in the programme. The review process operated under the direction of an independent person, charged with ensuring that all relevant identification processes and procedures were properly followed in the case of schools applying for a review. The school mentioned by the Deputy did not make an application for a Review.

Home School Community services Liaison were extended to all schools selected to participate in DEIS, that did not have HSCL previously. Furthermore, schools previously in the scheme but not selected under DEIS, will continue to receive HSCL services in line with their level of disadvantage and size of the school for the duration of the DEIS initiative.

School Supervision.

376. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Education and Science if there are guidelines for primary schools as to how early before the start of formal lessons children may be admitted to school property; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28581/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Sections 14, 15 and 23 of the Education Act, 1998 assigns each Board of Management and Principal Teacher responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school concerned. The terms of Circular 16/73 provide that the Principal of primary schools should organise supervision for the order and general behaviour

of the pupils during school hours. In particular, s/he should organise and participate in the effective supervision of the pupils during breaks, lunch-breaks, assembly and dismissal. This circular was drawn up in consultation with the school management representative bodies at that time.

Rules 121(4) and 124(1) of the Rules for National Schools and Section 23(2) of the Education Act 1998 oblige teachers to take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of pupils and to participate in supervising pupils when the pupils are on school premises, during school time and/or on school activities. Accordingly, it is the responsibility of all teachers individually and collectively to provide a duty of care at all times towards the pupils in the school in which they teach, including periods of supervision remains.

While my Department does not issue specific guidelines on requirements for supervision of different age pupils, it acknowledges that the degree of supervision required of school authorities varies with the circumstances, including the age of the pupil. Circular 11/95 (paragraph 3) states that a typical school day for Junior classes is 4 hours 40 minutes and Senior classes 5 hours and 40 minutes with appropriate recreation. This Circular is available on my Departments website at www.education.ie In accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989, it is the responsibility of individual school management authorities to have a safety statement in place in their schools. The Statement should identify potential hazards, assess the risks to health and safety and put appropriate provision in place to safeguard the safety and health of employees and pupils. The Safety Statement should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Finally, in instances where children who are not availing of school transport arrive earlier than the school opening time the board should provide advice, through effective communication with the parents that the pupils are not to arrive before a certain time.

Pension Provisions.

377. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Education and Science if her Department recognises years of teaching service in the Six Counties when assessing an application for early retirement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28582/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Teaching service given in Northern Ireland is not recognised for the purpose of teachers' superannuation awards in this State as there is no agreement at present between the jurisdictions on the transferability of pension entitlements. As the Deputy may be aware, at a recent North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) meeting in institutional format issues in relation

to obstacles to cross border mobility were discussed. In this context, the Council agreed that the NSMC Secretariat should convene a working group meeting to explore options for the transfer of pension rights on a cross-border basis. This group will report to future NSMC meetings.

Special Educational Needs.

378. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Education and Science if full-time learning supports will be provided for a person (details supplied) in County Sligo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28591/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has been operational since 1st January 2005 and is responsible for processing applications for special educational needs supports. I understand that the pupil referred to by the Deputy is in receipt of 5 hours resource teaching support and 12.5 SNA (Special needs Assistant) hours per week. The recommended hours have been sanctioned by my Department and a letter to this effect issued to the school on 12th September 2007.

Schools Building Projects.

379. **Deputy Charles Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to Parliamentary Question No. 139 of 1 November 2007, the name and location of each school in County Laois that is the subject of her Department's school building project, indicating the time-frame for completion in each case. [28594/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The projects in the school building programme are listed on my Department's website at www.education.ie. Projects are progressed within the context of the multi-annual school building programme which involves an investment of €4.5 billion during the period 2007 to 2013. Given the multiplicity of variables that impact on the progress of individual projects, and the Department's devolved approach to delivery, it would not be possible for me to provide the specific timeframes requested by the Deputy. However, the Deputy can be assured that my Department will continue to ensure that projects are delivered within the earliest possible timeframes including those in County Laois.

Road Safety.

380. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Education and Science if her Department will research and implement the Ennis County Clare based Irish school of excellence model of educat-

[Deputy Joe Carey.]

ing drivers to all schools in the State; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28643/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I have no plans to introduce driver education, in the form of driving lessons, in schools, and this is not the norm within the EU. Research available internationally is inconclusive on the benefits of teaching young people to drive at school. Particular issues highlighted include the gap arising between the time practical skills are learned initially and put into regular practice, and the risks arising from more young people taking up driving at an earlier age.

Nonetheless, I do believe that schools have a role to play both in teaching students about road safety issues and in helping them to develop the attitudes necessary to promote safe behaviour on the roads. The Social Personal and Health Education programme, which is mandatory in primary schools and at junior cycle level, provides a framework under which the generic values and skills which underpin responsible decision-making, and respect for the rights and safety of others can be developed and promoted among students. SPHE has a specific personal safety strand within the programme, and this provides a mechanism through which road safety issues for all can be best dealt with in an age appropriate way. In addition, the Civic Social and Political Education programme, also mandatory at junior cycle, deals with important themes such as Law, Rights and Responsibilities, Democracy and Inter-dependence, which are also important in a road safety context.

The implementation of SPHE and CSPE is being supported by resource materials on road safety developed by the Road Safety Authority. The RSA MACE “Safe to School” campaign at primary level was launched on 6 February 2007. It includes a DVD, posters, information leaflets, teacher worksheets for use within the SPHE curriculum, a guide for parents and a picture competition for students, and has been circulated to all primary schools. There is also a website www.safetoschool.ie which includes a walking guide, quizzes etc.

The Streetwise programme for junior cycle pupils was launched in UN Road Safety Week on 24 April 2007. It covers road safety across 9 topics – walking, cycling, seatbelts, airbags, speed, driver fatigue, motor cycle safety, hazard recognition and the engineering aspects of road safety, to be delivered over approximately nine class periods. Streetwise is available for live implementation in 2007/8 following a successful pilot. A follow on programme has also been developed by the RSA in collaboration with my Department, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Second Level Support Service for use in Transition Year, and is currently being piloted in

schools. Covering areas such as seatbelt use, hazard perception and driver attitudes towards alcohol and drug use the Transition Year Road Safety Programme will also prepare students for the Driver Theory Test. The Road Safety Authority has also obtained input from the Garda Síochána, NCT centres and Bus Eireann in the delivery of this programme.

School Accommodation.

381. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Science the progress of a school development (details supplied) in County Mayo. [28646/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): An application for an extension has been received from the school to which the Deputy refers. An assessment of projected enrolments, demographic trends and housing developments in the area will be required in order to assist in determining the long term projected enrolment on which the school’s long term accommodation needs will be based. When the long-term projected enrolment has been finalised and agreed with the school authorities, the Department will draw up schedules of accommodation for the project which will be notified to the school management authority. The required project will be considered in the context of the multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme.

Question No. 382 answered with Question No. 364.

Schools Building Projects.

383. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position in relation to the application for major capital funding in the case of a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; when this application is expected to progress; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28727/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I can confirm to the Deputy that the Department is in receipt of an application for large scale capital funding from the school to which he refers. The project has been assessed in accordance with the published prioritisation criteria for large scale building projects. Progress on the proposed works is being considered in the context of the multi-annual School Building and Modernisation programme.

384. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to Parliamentary Question No. 856 of 24 April 2007, the position in relation to the application for funding by a school (details supplied) in County

Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28728/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Department is not in receipt of an application for capital funding from the school to which the Deputy refers. At the time the response issued to Parliamentary Question Number 856 on the 24th April, 2007, I said that the Department understood that the school was preparing an application for major capital funding, however, this has not materialised.

385. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position in relation to the application for major capital funding in the case of a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; when this application is expected to progress; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28729/07]

391. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the status of an application for large scale capital funding by a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; when same is expected to progress. [28735/07]

392. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the status of an application for large scale capital funding by a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; when same is expected to progress; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28736/07]

393. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the status of the application for large scale capital funding by a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; when same is expected to progress; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28737/07]

395. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the status of the application for large scale capital funding by a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28739/07]

397. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the status of the application for large scale capital funding by a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28741/07]

409. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position in relation to an application for major capital funding in the case of a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; when this application is expected to progress; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28754/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 385, 391, 392, 393, 395, 397 and 409 together.

I can confirm to the Deputy that the Department is in receipt of applications for large scale capital funding from the schools to which he refers. The projects have been assessed in accordance with the published prioritisation criteria for large scale building projects. Progress on the proposed works is being considered in the context of the multi-annual School Building and Modernisation programme.

386. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 830 and 870 of 26 September 2007, the status of the submission by a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28730/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The project to which the Deputy referred to is at an early stage of architectural planning. A Stage 3 submission was examined by officials from my Department and clarification was sought from the Design Team on a number of items. This clarification has recently been received and it is currently being examined by my Department's technical team. The school's Board of Management will be kept advised of developments when the examination is complete.

Special Educational Needs.

387. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to Parliamentary Question No. 856 of 26 September 2007, the status in relation to same (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28731/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I am pleased to advise the Deputy that the special class for autism in question has opened.

Schools Refurbishment.

388. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to Parliamentary Question No. 867 of 26 September 2007, if the balance of grant has been awarded to a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28732/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Department approved funding of over €90,000 to the school in question under the Summer Works Scheme for works related to the school building. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that these have been com-

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

pleted and the balance of the grant-aid due has been paid to the school management.

Schools Building Projects.

389. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science if she has reviewed a stage two submission from a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; when this application is expected to proceed further in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28733/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that written approval of the Stage 2 submission was forwarded to the Board of Management of the school in a letter dated 1 November 2007. The progression of all large scale building projects from initial design stage through to construction phase, including this project, is considered on an on-going basis in the context of my Department's Multi-Annual School Building and Modernisation Programme in which the main focus is to deliver school places within rapidly developing areas.

390. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science if she has reviewed a stage three submission from a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; when this application is expected to proceed further in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28734/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The project to which the Deputy refers to is currently at an early stage of architectural planning. The schools Board of Management are currently in the process of re-appointing a Consultant Architect for this project. Once this appointment is complete officials from my Department will be in a position to give further direction to the School authorities in relation to progression of this project.

Questions Nos. 391 to 393, inclusive, answered with Question No. 385.

394. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the status of the tendering stage of an application by a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; when this project is expected to proceed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28738/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the building project for the school to which he refers is currently out to tender. On receipt of a completed tender report the matter

will receive further attention and the school will be kept appraised of the position.

Question No. 395 answered with Question No. 385.

396. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the status of the application for large scale capital funding by a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28740/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I can confirm to the Deputy that the Department is in receipt of an application for large scale capital funding from the school to which he refers. The project has been assessed in accordance with the published prioritisation criteria for large scale building projects. Progress on the proposed works is being considered in the context of the multi-annual School Building and Modernisation programme.

Question No. 397 answered with Question No. 385.

Special Educational Needs.

398. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the extra provision she has made since the beginning of the 2007-08 school year to meet the requirements of children with autism or Asperger's syndrome; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28743/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Deputy will be aware of my commitment to ensuring that all children, including those with autism or Asperger's syndrome, receive an education appropriate to their needs. As the Deputy is aware, the National Council for Special Education is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers, for the establishment of special classes for autism and for allocating resource teachers and special needs assistants to schools to support children with special needs.

During the 2006/2007 school year 75 autism specific classes were sanctioned by NCSE to cater for pupils with autism bringing the total now sanctioned to over 270. My Department, conscious of the need to provide professional development for teachers of autistic children, permitted schools which were scheduled to open autism specific classes in September 2007 to recruit teachers two months early so that they could be trained in autism-specific teaching interventions and behavioural interventions.

The NCSE will continue to establish additional autism classes where the need arises in both special schools and mainstream primary and post-

primary schools. All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

Schools Building Projects.

399. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the extent to which she expects to address the full requirements of the school building programme at primary and second level in 2007-08; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28744/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): During the period of the last National Development Plan 2000-2006, record levels of investment and the streamlining of delivery systems allowed a major acceleration of the school building programme. Over €2.6 billion was invested in upgrading existing school infrastructure and providing new school accommodation at both first and second-level. This was the largest investment programme in the history of the State and delivered over 7,800 building projects involving tens of thousands of extra permanent school places. This investment has helped to increase capacity and transform the standard of accommodation in many schools throughout the country.

Innovations in the delivery of school buildings such as Generic Repeat Designs and the use of the Design and Build model have been introduced to ensure that new school buildings are delivered in the fastest time-frame possible. Much greater authority has also been devolved to local school management boards to manage and deliver smaller building projects, thereby freeing my Department to concentrate on the larger scale projects. We have also improved forward planning through greater cooperation with Local Authorities and the publication of 10-year Area Development Plans.

The budget for 2007 is the first year of the roll out of the National Development Plan 2007-2013 which will involve an investment of over €4.5 billion in school buildings. This funding will enable my Department to continue to take a proactive approach to the provision of modern school accommodation with a particular focus on the needs of developing areas. We are planning for an expected 100,000 additional school places over the lifetime of the Plan. This year alone over €540 million will be spent on school building infrastructure with over 1,500 projects on my Department's school building programme. Construction in 2007 alone will deliver over 700 classrooms to provide permanent accommodation for over 17,500 pupils, mainly in developing areas.

As part of our strategy for the provision of school places for 2008 and onwards my Department has also initiated a tender process for a drawdown contract facility that will be used to provide additional school places in the rapidly developing areas. This drawdown contract facility is aimed at providing school accommodation in very short timescales using modern methodologies such as off-site construction. My Department is also working closely with the relevant local authorities in relation to the acquisition of suitable sites for new schools and, where possible, pre-empting any planning issues that may arise.

The Deputy can be assured that my Department will target funding, as appropriate, in order to ensure that additional school accommodation is provided in developing areas within the earliest possible timeframes.

School Accommodation.

400. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of children accommodated in prefabricated classrooms or other temporary accommodation at present; when she expects to address this issue in full; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28745/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The information sought by the Deputy is not readily available in my Department. However, if the Deputy wishes to request details on a specific school, my officials will provide the required information. The demand for additional accommodation in schools has risen significantly over the last number of years mainly due to the rapid expansion in teacher numbers particularly in the area of special needs, the growth in the school-going population in rapidly developing areas and the demands to cater for diversity through the recognition of new Gael-scoileanna and Educate Together schools.

The focus within my Department is to empower schools to resolve their accommodation needs, wherever possible, by way of permanent accommodation. In order to reduce the amount of temporary/prefabricated accommodation at primary level and to upgrade existing facilities, two new initiatives, the Permanent Accommodation Initiative and the Small School Initiative were launched in 2003 on a pilot basis. The purpose of these initiatives was to allow primary schools to undertake a permanent solution to their classroom accommodation needs and to achieve the best value for money as opposed to the provision of temporary accommodation.

The feedback has in general been very positive, the number of schools participating has increased year on year and many schools are anxious to be included. In order to maintain this momentum I approved over 250 additional schools to partici-

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

pate in these schemes in 2007. As a result of these schemes the amount spent on the purchase of prefabricated buildings in has been significantly reduced.

401. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the way it is intended that primary or second level schools which cannot comply with health or safety standards due to overcrowding, cramped conditions or otherwise unsuitable accommodation are expected to be in a position to meet such standards in early date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28746/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Individual school authorities are responsible in the first instance for health and safety issues at schools and it is the responsibility of school management authorities to have a safety statement in place in their schools. Schools are obliged to identify possible hazards, assess the risks to health and safety and to put appropriate safeguards in place to mitigate the potential risk to the school community.

It is open to any school to apply to my Department for additional accommodation to meet its needs. All applications for capital funding are assessed in accordance with the Department's published prioritisation criteria for large scale building projects which were drawn up following consultation with the education partners. Following this assessment, each application is assigned a band rating. Progress on individual projects is consistent with that band rating. It is also open to school managements, where an immediate need for additional accommodation exists, to apply for the provision of temporary rented accommodation while awaiting the provision of permanent accommodation.

Provision is built into the School Building and modernisation Programme to enable schools address urgent health and safety problems. In this regard, primary schools are given an annual allocation under the grant scheme for minor works which can be used entirely at the discretion of school management to address basic health and safety issues relating to school infrastructure. My Department has invested in a record school building programme which between 2000 and 2007 involved the delivery of over 9,000 projects with an investment of over €3 billion. The budget for 2007, at over €540m, is the first year of the roll out of the new NDP which will involve an investment of over €4.5 billion in school buildings in the coming years.

This multi-annual funding will enable my Department to continue to take a proactive approach to the provision of modern school accommodation having particular regard to the needs of developing areas.

Special Educational Needs.

402. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the degree to which the current complement of remedial, resource or special needs teachers is adequate to meet the requirements at the various schools throughout County Kildare; her proposals to address these issues; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28747/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I wish to advise the Deputy that the level of resources being made available by my Department to support students with special educational needs nationally has grown significantly in recent years.

A significant development is the establishment of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) which has been in operation since 1 January 2005 with over 90 members of staff working exclusively in supporting students with special educational needs. The NCSE was established under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004 to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disabilities with particular emphasis on children. Since it was established in 2005, the NCSE has been responsible for allocating resources for children with special educational needs. The NCSE has a key role in the delivery of services and operates through a network of special educational needs organisers (SENOs) who act as a focal point of contact for schools and parents. SENOs are responsible for processing applications from schools for special needs supports and they convey decisions on the applications directly to the schools. These supports include resource teaching hours, special needs assistant (SNA) support and assistive technology and equipment.

Children who have been assessed as having special educational needs have access to a range of special support services. The services range from special schools dedicated to particular disability groups, through special classes/units attached to ordinary schools, to placement on an integrated basis in ordinary schools, with special back-up supports.

At primary level, there are now over 6,000 teachers working directly with children with special educational needs, including those requiring learning support, compared with fewer than 1,500 in 1998. One out of every five primary school teachers is now working specifically with children with special needs. At post-primary level, over 2,450 wholtime equivalent teachers support special needs students compared with 200 in 1998. This includes 566 learning support teachers. Significant progress has been made in relation to increasing the number of SNAs in our

schools who specifically cater for children with care needs. There are over 8,800 whole time equivalent SNAs in primary and post-primary schools supporting the care needs of these students compared with approximately 300 in 1998.

As well as this significant increase in the numbers of additional teachers and SNAs directly providing appropriate education and care supports for children with special educational needs, much investment has taken place in the provision of transport, specialist school accommodation, home tuition, assistive technology and equipment. For example, more than €3million was spent last year on specialised equipment and materials and nearly €50million on school transport for special needs pupils.

In addition to the developments outlined above, my Department's Teacher Education Section has developed a strategy designed to meet the continuing professional development needs of personnel working with children with special educational needs. This involves a major expansion of the range of post-graduate professional training programmes available to teachers in the special needs area and the ongoing development of the Special Education Support Service (SESS) to support schools staff locally. The SESS now has 13 full time seconded teachers and 16 part-time associates and had contact with some 15,000 teachers in the last year. Furthermore, the SESS will be undertaking a recruitment drive in the near future to facilitate an increased level of training.

Going forward, the NCSE has produced an Implementation Report regarding the EPSEN Act, which is currently receiving detailed consideration within my Department. As part of this process, my officials have met with the education partners to obtain their views on the report and its recommendations.

I wish to assure the Deputy that the provision of appropriate educational intervention and supports for children with special educational needs continues to be a key Government priority.

Schools Building Projects.

403. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the progress in respect of the various developmental stages in the matter of the new school project at Kill, County Kildare; when she expects the proposal to go to tender; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28748/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The project to which the Deputy refers to is currently at early architectural planning. Officials from my Department are currently in the final stages of appointment of a Design Team for this project. Once the Design Team has

been appointed a briefing meeting will be arranged to allow this project commence the process of architectural planning. The progression of large scale building projects from initial design stage through to construction phase, including this project, is considered on an on-going basis in the context of my Department's Multi-Annual School Building and Modernisation Programme in which the main focus is to deliver school places within rapidly developing areas.

404. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the progress in the matter of the provision of the new school replacement (details supplied) in County Kildare; the current timescale for the provision of the facility; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28749/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): County Kildare Vocational Education Committee as client/contracting authority for the project referred to by the Deputy, is currently progressing plans to re-locate the school and extend capacity to 1000 pupils. I understand that the project is at detailed design stage and has recently received Planning Permission.

405. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the recent progress in the matter of the provision of permanent facilities for the proposed new school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28750/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The project to which the Deputy refers is currently at early architectural planning. A stage 3 submission was reviewed by Officials from my Department and clarification requested from the Design Team on a number of items. This clarification has now been received and is currently being examined. The school's Board of Management will be kept advised of developments when the examination is complete.

406. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the proposed schedule for the provision of the new school at Ardclough, County Kildare; the full extent of the proposed accommodation and time-scale for its provision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28751/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The process of appointing a design team to the school building project referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage. The new school building will consist of 16 mainstream classrooms and appropriate ancillary accommodation. Progression of all major building projects, including this project, will be considered

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

in the context of my Department's Multi-Annual School Building and Modernisation Programme.

407. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the progress she has to report in regard to the provision of the extra facilities required at a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; the proposed time-scale; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28752/07]

410. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to her reply to Parliamentary Question No. 609 of 26 June 2007, the status of a submission by a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28755/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 407 and 410 together.

The project to which the Deputy refers is currently at early architectural planning. Written approval of the Stage 2 submission was forwarded to the Board of Management of the school in a letter dated 1 November 2007. Once the project for this school is complete it will provide facilities for a total of 16 mainstream classrooms plus ancillary accommodation. The progression of all large scale building projects from initial design stage through to construction phase, including this project, is considered on an on-going basis in the context of my Department's Multi-Annual School Building and Modernisation Programme in which the main focus is to deliver school places within rapidly developing areas.

408. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the extent to which she has put in place specific provisions to meet the requirements of educational needs in the N4-M4 corridor; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28753/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The recommendations in the N4/M4 Area Development Plan, which was published in May 2005 by the Commission on School Accommodation, forms a vital framework in which future decisions about school planning and provision in the areas referred to by the Deputy will be made. Progress on individual recommendations is being considered in the context of the Multi-Annual School Building and Modernisation Programme subject to the prioritisation criteria for large scale building projects.

Question No. 409 answered with Question No. 385.

Question No. 410 answered with Question No. 407.

Psychological Service.

411. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science when she expects adequate child psychological services to become readily available at all schools throughout the country; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28756/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Deputy will, I'm sure, be aware that all primary and post primary schools have access to psychological assessments either directly through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) or through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA). Schools that do not currently have NEPS psychologists assigned to them may avail of the SCPA and have an assessment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved and paid for by NEPS. The prioritisation of urgent cases for assessment is a matter for the school principal in the first instance.

The Deputy will also be aware that since NEPS was established, we have trebled the number of psychologists in the service. Notwithstanding this and as I have previously announced my Department is committed to increasing psychological service staffing further, so that by 2009 there will be 200 NEPS psychologists. To this end I can inform the Deputy that my Department has been working, in conjunction with the Public Appointments Commission to recruit new psychologists from an existing panel to the service.

The number of psychologists as of April 2007 stood at 128 including 4 assigned to the National Behavioural Support Service and to the Further Education Service. Since then nine individuals have been appointed in this regard. This advance in numbers has been reduced somewhat by the effects of resignations and retirement and the compliment in service currently stands at 134. Three further psychologists are due to join NEPS under this process between now and early January 2008.

The panel concerned is now exhausted and the Public Appointments Service has recently announced the commencement of a competition from which a new panel will be drawn to continue the recruitment process. The deadline for receipt of applications in this regard has now passed and work is proceeding on the short-listing of candidates for interview. It is envisaged that the process will be completed and panels formed by the end of next month allowing recruitment to recommence early in 2008. My Department remains committed to the development of a strong and robust educational psychological service serving the needs of all primary and post-primary pupils.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio.

412. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of extra teachers that have been appointed in the 2007-08 school year; the degree to which this has positively impacted on pupil-teacher ratios in the classroom; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28759/07]

413. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science if pupil-teacher ratios in the classroom have actually worsened since the beginning of the 2007-08 school year when compared with the year previous; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28760/07]

415. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of schools throughout the country which currently have pupil-teacher ratios in the classroom in excess of the national average; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28762/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 412, 413 and 415 together.

At 30 September of the current school year there were an additional 985 teaching posts at primary level. Pupil Teacher Ratio in respect of all primary schools is currently only available at national level and is not disaggregated by school or any other variable.

The following is the Pupil Teacher Ratio nationally since September 2002:

Year	
2002/03	18.0
2003/04	17.44
2004/05	17.1
2005/06	17
2006/07	16.4

The Pupil Teacher Ratio for the 2007/08 school year is currently being compiled in my Department.

As the Deputy will be aware, major improvements have been made in staffing at primary level in recent years. There are now 5,000 more primary teachers than there were in 2002. By the 2006/07 school year, we had reduced the average class size in our primary schools to 24, while the pupil teacher ratio was 16.4:1, including resource teachers etc. In that year, schools were staffed on the basis of a general rule of at least one classroom teacher for every 28 children. Given that the national average was 24, many schools benefited from much more favourable staffing ratios than this.

Extra teachers were provided by the Government for the 2007/08 school year to improve

primary school staffing so that schools would generally get at least one classroom teacher for every 27 children.

A further initiative in recent years that has been of direct benefit to primary schools has been the change in the criteria for developing schools. For the current school year the threshold for getting a developing school post was reduced specifically to help schools that are seeing large increases in enrolments each year. Over 330 such posts have been sanctioned in the 2007/08 school year compared to 280 in 2006/07.

The improvements we have made in school staffing in recent years are absolutely unparalleled. The Government is committed to providing more teachers to our primary schools over the next five years in order to reduce class sizes. We will also continue our focus on measures to improve the quality of education in our primary schools to ensure that increased resources lead to better outcomes for our children.

414. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of submissions she has received from various schools throughout the country seeking the provision of extra teaching staff in order to reduce class sizes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28761/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The mainstream staffing of a primary school is determined by reference to the enrolment of the school on 30th September of the previous school year. The actual number of mainstream posts sanctioned is determined by reference to a staffing schedule which is issued annually to all primary schools.

Within the terms of the staffing arrangements for primary schools there is provision for additional posts, referred to as developing school posts, to be assigned to schools on the basis of projected enrolments for the next school year. Under these arrangements, a developing school post may be sanctioned provisionally where the projected enrolment at 30th September of the school year in question equals or exceeds a specified figure. If the specified figure is not achieved on 30th September, sanction for the post is withdrawn. Over 330 such posts have been sanctioned in the 2007/08 school year compared to 280 in 2006/07.

Teacher allocations to second level schools are approved annually by my Department in accordance with established rules based on recognised pupil enrolment. Each school management authority is required to organise its time-table and subject options having regard to pupils needs within the limit of its approved teacher allocation. The rules for allocating teaching resources provide that where a school management authority is unable to meet its curricular commitments within its approved allocation, my Department

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

will consider applications for additional short term support i.e. curricular concessions.

An independent appeals mechanism is available to school authorities who wish to appeal the adequacy of their teacher allocation. The primary staffing appeal board and the post primary appeal committee operate independently of the Department and its decision is final.

Question No. 415 answered with Question No. 412.

School Accommodation.

416. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the mechanisms that exist in her Department to alert her to upcoming school accommodation requirements arising from population trends before such requirements become a necessity and with a view to engaging in adequate forward planning to ensure a streamlined provision of accommodation as required, as opposed to the present system; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28763/07]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The general process of assessing and planning for the need for additional provision at primary or post-primary level in any given area entails consideration of all relevant factors, including enrolment and demographic trends, housing and other developments and the capacity of existing schools to meet the demand for places. Local Authorities are obliged by statute to refer draft local area development plans to the Department for observation and comment so that lands can be zoned for future education use. There are numerous sites reserved for education purposes under this process particularly in rapidly developing areas. Once subsequent residential planning permissions are consistent with these plans, the focus for the Department is one of collaboration with the local authority to ensure that the lands set aside for educational provision can be acquired and developed as they are needed.

To deal with this increasing demand for school places, the Government is providing funding of €4.5 billion over the lifetime of the new National Development Plan (NDP). This will be the largest investment programme in schools in the history of the State and it will enable my Department to ensure that school places are available where needed as well as continuing to upgrade existing school facilities. This investment will allow my Department to continue the school building programme which commenced during the life time of the last NDP when well over €2.6 billion was invested in school development, delivering over 7,800 projects.

The budget for 2007 is the first year of the roll out of the new NDP. This funding will enable my Department to continue to provide modern

school accommodation on an on-going basis, particularly in developing areas. This year alone around over €540 million will be spent on school building infrastructure with over 1,500 projects on my Department's school building programme. Construction in 2007 alone will deliver over 700 classrooms to provide permanent accommodation for over 17,500 pupils, mainly in developing areas.

Pension Provisions.

417. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Defence if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare has received all of their entitlements on retiring from their civilian position with his Department; the amounts paid to the person when they retired; if there has been changes to their entitlements since they retired; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28081/07]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O'Dea):

The person concerned retired on grounds of ill-health from his position as a civilian employee with the Defence Forces in April 1986. He was awarded a gratuity amounting to £4,709.33 and a yearly pension amounting to £508.61 on retirement, under the terms of the non-contributory pension scheme for non-established State employees. The person in question received on his retirement all of his entitlements under this pension scheme. Over the years, the rate of occupational pension paid to the person concerned has been increased in line with pay awards, both general and special, for serving civilian employees.

Under the terms of the non-contributory pension scheme for non-established State employees, the rate of occupational pension paid to a retired civilian employee must be re-calculated at age 65 years to take account of any increases in the level of social welfare benefits due at that stage so that there is no net financial gain from the two sources of income. As a result of the increase in the rate of social welfare benefits due to the person concerned from his 65th birthday, the rate of occupational pension paid to the person in question was reduced when he attained the age of 65 years in June 1997.

Ministerial Staff.

418. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Defence the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by his Department on 1 November 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28149/07]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O'Dea):

The information requested is set out in the table.

Name	Title	Salary Scale
Mr. Philip Hannon	Special Advisor (Unestablished)	€61,760 – €76,393
Ms. Bernadette McGinn	Personal Assistant (Unestablished)	€33,886 – €42,934
Ms. Carol Moloney	Personal Secretary (Unestablished)	€17,469 – €33,704

419. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Defence the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by him; and if

he will make a statement on the matter. [28164/07]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O’Dea):
The information requested is set out in the table.

Name	Title	Salary Scale
Mr. Derek Mooney	Special Advisor (Unestablished)	€82,016 – €101,446
Ms. Suzanne Coogan	Press Advisor (Unestablished)	€82,016 — €101,446
Mr. Fergal O’Brien	Personal Assistant (Unestablished)	€44,314 – €56,252
Ms. Yvonne MacMahon	Personal Secretary (Unestablished)	€22,064 – €42,571

Defence Forces Training.

420. **Deputy John Cregan** asked the Minister for Defence when it is expected that negotiations between PDFORRA and his Department under the conciliation and arbitration scheme, in relation to payment of the permanent instructors allowance to qualified MT instructors with the transport company, Collins Barracks, Cork will be finalised. [28544/07]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O’Dea):

As I indicated to the Deputy in my reply to Parliamentary Question Number 428 on 6th November 2007 this claim is the subject of correspondence between my Department and the Representative Association. It is not possible to say at this stage when the negotiations on the claim, which are taking place under the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme, are likely to be finalised. I can however assure the Deputy that the claim will be dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

Pension Provisions.

421. **Deputy Bernard Allen** asked the Minister for Defence if he will amend Article 38 of the Pension Scheme 1937 whereby if a member of the Army is granted a service pension and is in receipt of a disablement pension under the Army Pensions Act 1980 an abatement of the combined value of the pensions should be carried out; his views on whether it is correct and just that a former member of the Defence Forces who was judged to qualify for a disability pension in view of their service then has their pension reduced because of the award of the disability pension; and if he will review the Act with a view to eliminating this injustice. [28593/07]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O’Dea):

Where a person in receipt of a service pension under the Defence Forces Pensions Schemes is granted a disability pension under the Army Pensions Acts, the Schemes provide that the service pension must be reduced (or abated) — usually by an amount equal to one-half of the disability pension. The reduction is applied to the service pension and not to the disability pension, which is paid in full. There is an advantage to the pensioner in this arrangement because disability pensions are exempt from income tax whereas service pensions are liable to tax. The provisions outlined are of long-standing and the objective is to limit the total amount payable by way of pension. The principle involved is not unique to the Defence Forces and is applied generally in the public service.

Road Traffic Offences.

422. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the status of Trafficwatch; the plan for its development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28046/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Garda authorities that Traffic Watch is a dedicated telephone line that allows responsible road users to report any incidents of bad or dangerous driving offences they have witnessed. Traffic Watch calls are answered and administered at the Garda Information Service Centre (GISC) which is located in Castlebar. The centre is staffed on a twenty four hour basis by trained call takers who are civilian members of An Garda Síochána. The centre receives in the region of 13,000 calls per annum.

[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

I am also informed that call operators record the Traffic Watch incident on PULSE. If the incident reported is deemed to be urgent the phone operator telephones the relevant Divisional Communications Centre outlining the specific details of the incident in order that the offending vehicle can be intercepted. In cases where the incident reported is not deemed to be urgent the message is forwarded by fax to the relevant District Office where an investigating member will be appointed to examine the incident. I am further informed that the Traffic Watch system is currently being reviewed. Any changes identified to improve the effectiveness of the service will be considered.

423. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will procure data from the Garda and the Courts Service on the number of drivers who have been prosecuted for an offence under the Railway Safety Act 2005, section 138 — bridge strikes, in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28571/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): In the time available it has not been possible for the Garda authorities to supply the details requested by the Deputy. I will be in contact with the Deputy when the information is to hand.

Departmental Inquiries.

424. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the terms of reference and timeframe for the Gallagher investigation into the 1981 Stardust fire tragedy; and the efforts he has made over the past year to expedite the start of the independent investigation into the Stardust fire tragedy. [28671/07]

489. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if the final terms of reference for the independent examination into the 1981 Stardust fire tragedy have been agreed; and when these terms will be published. [28670/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 424 and 489 together.

I can advise the Deputy that the Terms of Reference for the independent examination by Mr. John Gallagher, SC, have been agreed with the Stardust Victims Committee. While the management of this process is of course a matter for Mr. Gallagher, I understand that he intends to put the terms of reference in the public domain in the near future. I can also inform the Deputy that my Department has been very active in putting in

place the necessary accommodation, funding and other support services for this process.

Deportation Orders.

425. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a person (details supplied) has been informed by the Irish Embassy in Moscow that they are ineligible for a visa to be reunited with their spouse under the free movement of persons regulations 2006 as they were deported from Ireland in 2006; if this refusal will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28026/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Immigration Division of my Department that a visa for the applicant cannot issue until such time as the deportation order is revoked. This matter is currently under review and I understand that a recommendation will be made to me in the near future as to whether the deportation order is or is not to be revoked. I will inform the Deputy of my decision in due course.

Residency Permits.

426. **Deputy Michael D’Arcy** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when a decision will be made on an application for residency stamp four in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; and the expected period of time it will take to complete the processing of same. [28027/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I understand from the Immigration Division of my Department that the person concerned was granted long term residency and was notified of this decision by letter dated the 30th July 2007. From enquiries carried out with the Garda National Immigration Bureau, I understand the person in question attended his local Immigration Office on the 6th August 2007 and was granted permission to remain in the State until July 2012.

Citizenship Applications.

427. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when applications for naturalisation by persons (details supplied) in County Mayo will be finalised. [28028/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Applications for certificates of naturalisation from the individuals referred to in the Deputy’s Question were received in the Citizenship Section of my Department in January 2006. On examination of the applications it was determined that the persons

concerned did not meet the statutory residency requirements as set out in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. Letters informing them of this were issued, via their solicitor, on 30 March 2007. It is open to the persons in question to lodge a new application if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements applicable at that time.

Residency Permits.

428. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if an application for permission to remain in the State on the basis of parentage of an Irish born child has been received from a person (details supplied); when a decision will be made on this application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28042/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The person in question submitted an application in October 2007 to my Department for renewal of permission to remain in State under the revised arrangements for parents of Irish children born prior to 1st January, 2005, commonly referred to as the IBC/05 scheme. However, as the individual concerned was not granted permission to remain in the State under the terms of the original IBC/05 scheme, the question of renewal does not arise and the documentation submitted to my Department in this regard was returned on 16th October, 2007.

Citizenship Applications.

429. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when an application for citizenship will be decided for a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28043/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Officials in the Citizenship Section of my Department inform me that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation for the person referred to in the Deputy's Question.

Garda Investigations.

430. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 17. [28055/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the incident referred to is under investigation. As the Garda investigation is ongoing, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this time.

Residency Permits.

431. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when his Department will return the marriage, birth and professional certificates submitted by a person (details supplied) in County Wexford with their application for permission to remain in the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28061/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the certificates in question were returned to the individuals concerned on 7th November, 2007.

Citizenship Applications.

432. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position with regard to an application for Irish citizenship from a person (details supplied) in County Waterford; and if, in view of the applicant's advanced age, he will ensure the application is processed speedily. [28071/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): An application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's Question was received in the Citizenship Section of my Department in February 2006. Officials in that section are currently processing applications received in the beginning of 2005 and have approximately 4,500 applications on hand to be dealt with before that of the person concerned. These are generally dealt with in chronological order as this is deemed to be the fairest to all applicants. It is likely, therefore, that further processing of the application will commence in the second half of 2008. I will inform the Deputy and the person in question when I have reached a decision on the matter.

Criminal Prosecutions.

433. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the way he determines whether legislation is effective if his Department does not collect the requisite statistics on convictions set out in new legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28074/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Criminal legislation is kept under review in my Department with a view to ascertaining whether it is operating in an efficient and effective manner. A variety of factors is taken into account in assessing the effectiveness of any piece of criminal legislation. These can include, but are not limited to, statistical information on the incidence of prosecutions or convictions. In addition to statistical information they can include the experience of An

[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

Garda Síochána and other agencies in the operation of current legislation and the interpretation of the law by the courts.

Statistics on different aspects of the criminal justice system are available to my Department from a number of agencies, including the Central Statistics Office, An Garda Síochána, the Courts Service and the Irish Prison Service. Production of statistics requested may from time to time require research by the requested agency.

Public Order Offences.

434. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of public drinking fines handed out in Clondalkin and Lucan; the number of these fines that have been paid for the years 2006 and to date in 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28075/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Garda authorities that in Clondalkin and Lucan Garda District 181 on the spot notices were issued in 2006 for the offence, contrary to local authority by-laws, of public drinking, of which 80 were paid. To date in 2007, 202 fines have been issued and 98 have been paid. Figures for 2007 are provisional, operational and liable to change.

Visa Applications.

435. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if a person (details supplied) has an entitlement to a visa to enable them to remain in this State. [28090/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Immigration Division of my Department that an application for permission to remain was received from the person concerned in January 2007. He subsequently requested the withdrawal of his application by letters dated 28th June 2007, 3rd July 2007, 5th July 2007 and 11th September 2007.

The person in question returned to the State on the 12th September, 2007. A third party contacted the Garda National Immigration Bureau on his behalf and was advised that an application for permission to remain must be lodged with the Immigration Division of my Department. To date there is no record of such an application being received. The person concerned must now lodge an application for permission to remain in the State to the General Immigration Division of my Department, 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2, together with supporting documentation.

Departmental Expenditure.

436. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if there has been further progress on his stated intention of establishing funding for political par-

ties to appoint and resource integration officers for the purpose of developing more inclusive practices and implementing strategies to encourage immigrant political participation; if there is a timeframe for doing so; if further thought has been given to the criteria for the funding and what those might be; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28101/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): In the context of 2008 Budget Estimates, a number of areas have been identified where funding is required to mobilise, encourage and stimulate a wide range of stakeholders, including political parties, to engage with new communities in an effective and strategic manner. The time frame and structure of funding will be determined by the outcome of ongoing budgetary discussions.

Garda Investigations.

437. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if his attention has been drawn to the concerns being expressed by local residents regarding a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9 and the allegations being made by a number of people against them; if his further attention has been drawn to the widespread belief within the community that there has been no attempt to investigate the allegations or apprehend this person; if he will ascertain from the Commissioner the steps that have been taken to investigate the allegations or apprehend this person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28106/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to the matters raised by the Deputy. I will contact the Deputy again when the report is to hand.

Public Order Offences.

438. **Deputy Áine Brady** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of anti-social behaviour orders that have been applied in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28117/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Part 11 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006, which provides for civil proceedings in relation to anti-social behaviour by adults, was commenced on 1 January, 2007. Part 13 of the Act relating to anti-social behaviour by children was commenced on 1 March, 2007. These provisions set out an incremental procedure for addressing anti-social behaviour by adults and children. With regard to children, these range from a warning from a member of An Garda Síochána, to a good behaviour contract involving the child and his or her parents or guardian, to referral to the Garda Juvenile Diver-

sion Programme and to the making of a behaviour order by the Childrens' Court.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that up to 30 September, 2007, 264 behaviour warnings to adults and 80 behaviour warnings to children were issued. There have also been two formal good behaviour contracts, which are used only in the case of children, agreed. I am further informed these figures include the Carlow/Kildare Garda Division, which issued 16 behaviour warnings to adults and 2 behaviour warnings to children. Figures are provisional, operational and liable to change.

Garda Deployment.

439. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if additional gardaí have been allocated in recent years to K district, Dublin metropolitan area

Station	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
Blanchardstown	89	94	104	106	124	132	142	152	167	174	173
Cabra	82	76	80	83	76	76	65	63	69	68	70
Finglas	76	83	90	88	78	78	68	74	76	87	88
Total	247	253	274	277	278	286	275	289	314	329	331

The next allocation of Probationer Gardai will take place on the 23rd November 2007. The needs of the Dublin Metropolitan Region Western Garda Division, which includes the K District, will be fully considered in this allocation within the overall context of the needs of Garda Stations, throughout the country. In reply to Question 241 of the 24th October 2007, I gave a detailed breakdown of Garda personnel strength in each Division in the country.

440. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will ask the Garda authorities to urgently examine the need to base a dedicated drug unit in the Finglas Cabra area in addition to that based in Blanchardstown as requested by the Cabra Community Policing Forum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28125/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the District Drug Unit for Blanchardstown Garda District, which includes the sub-Districts of Finglas and Cabra, is based at Blanchardstown Garda Station. The Unit currently comprises one Sergeant and nine Gardaí, who are drawn from each of the Garda sub-Districts. Ongoing liaison is also maintained with the Garda National Drugs Unit in respect of persons suspected of being involved in the illegal importation and / or distribution of drugs.

The Deputy will be aware that resources such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation and the Criminal Assets Bureau are also

west, and above what normally applies in view of the high incidence of gangland drug related crime in this district; the number of gardaí stationed in K district in 1987 and in 2007; the number normally allocated to a similarly sized rural district with little or no gangland crime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28124/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the information requested in relation to the personnel strength of the K District in 1987 is not readily available and can only be obtained by the disproportionate expenditure of Garda time and resources relative to the information sought. The personnel strength of the K District for each year end from 1997 — 2006 inc, and 31 October 2007 which is the latest date for which figures are readily available, was as set out in the table.

deployed extensively in dealing with drug crime and the detection and prevention of drug related crime is, of course, a matter for all members of An Garda Síochána. The increases taking place in the overall strength of An Garda Síochána will continue to assist in enabling additional Garda resources to be targeted at the areas of greatest need, with areas where there is a significant drug problem being deemed a particular priority.

As the Deputy will appreciate, policing operations and the deployment of Garda resources are matters for the Garda Commissioner. It is the responsibility of Garda management to allocate personnel within the Garda organisation on a priority basis in accordance with overall policing requirements. The assignment of Garda personnel throughout the country, together with overall policing arrangements and operational strategy, are continually monitored and reviewed. Such monitoring ensures that optimum use is made of Garda resources, and the best possible Garda service is provided to the general public.

In such a context, I am further informed by the Garda authorities that the proposal to establish a dedicated drugs unit in the areas referred to by the Deputy is under consideration by senior Garda management in the current preparation of An Garda Síochána's policing plans for 2008.

Garda Stations.

441. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the expected date for the temporary closure of Fitzgibbon Street Garda station; the duration of the closure time involved; the extent of the work that

[Deputy Tony Gregory.]

will be undertaken; and the location the gardaí will be based in the interim. [28126/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have been informed by the Garda authorities that extensive refurbishment and redevelopment work is to be carried out to Fitzgibbon Street Garda Station and this work may take a number of years to complete. The Office of Public Works, which has responsibility for the provision of Garda accommodation, is currently seeking temporary accommodation in which to relocate Gardaí in order for this major redevelopment to take place. An Garda Síochána and the Office of Public Works are also working together to plan the extent of the works to take place and until this process has been completed it is not possible to give an indication of the date the works will commence and their expected duration. I am assured by the relevant parties that there will be no avoidable delay in progressing this project.

Residency Permits.

442. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the criteria used to determine if the non-EEA spouse of an Irish citizen is granted a C visa or a D visa before entering Ireland for the first time. [28132/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): A person who is visa-required wishing to come to Ireland to reside in the State with his/her spouse must apply for a “Join Spouse” visa. Where all the required documentation/evidence has been furnished and the Visa Officer is satisfied with the bona fides of the application, a D-type Visa would normally be approved. In very exceptional cases, where a Visa Officer has concerns over the relationship history for example, a C-type Visa might be approved. The rationale for this is that the applicant is being afforded the opportunity to demonstrate the

existence of the relationship. Comprehensive information when making a “Join Spouse” visa is available on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service at www.inis.gov.ie

443. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if his Department has begun recording figures for the number of residency applications based on marriage to an Irish citizen that have been refused as the marriage was believed to be fraudulent; and if so, the number of applications refused on these grounds to date. [28133/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Immigration Operations Section of my Department has provided the statistical data requested by the Deputy in the table. The data covers the three year period 2005 -2007 inclusive. Refusal of applications to remain in the State based on marriage to an Irish national

Year	Refused	Abandoned
2005	46	71
2006	46	73
2007 (January–October)	12	43

Ministerial Staff.

444. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by his Department on 1 November 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28156/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The information requested by the Deputy in relation to political appointees employed by my Department on 01 November, 2002 is set out in the tables.

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform

Post	Name	Salary Scale
Special Advisor	Sinead McSweeney	Principal Officer Higher Scale €68,409 – €84,371
Personal Assistant	Hugh Hardiman	Higher Executive Officer Scale €34,773 – €44,029
Personal Secretary	Mary McCowan	Secretarial Assistant Scale €17,469 – €33,703

Minister of State

Post	Name	Salary Scale
Personal Assistant	Fergal O’Brien	Higher Executive Officer Scale €34,773 – €44,029
Personal Secretary	Olive McNamara	Secretarial Assistant Scale €17,469 – €33,703

The Minister of State also had 2 civilian drivers who were paid a weekly wage of €502.94.

445. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff

Post	Name	Salary Scale
Special Advisor	Cathy Herbert	Principal Officer Higher Scale €88,261 – €108,856
Personal Assistant	Maura Cosgrove	Higher Executive Officer Scale €44,314 – €56,250
Personal Secretary	Marian Quinlan	Secretarial Assistant Scale €24,271 – €46,828

Asylum Support Services.

446. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the annual cost of operating the asylum centre in Ballaghaderreen, County Roscommon in each year since it opened; the corresponding number of persons being accommodated; the breakdown of the budget into various categories; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28187/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Reception & Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department is charged with, inter alia, responsibility for the accommodation of asylum seekers while their applications for asylum are processed.

The centre in Ballaghaderreen was first contracted to the RIA for the accommodation of asylum seekers on 13 July, 2004 for an initial period of 20 weeks, after which the contract was renewed. The current contract will expire on 6 July, 2009 when its future as an asylum centre will be reassessed. The centre has a capacity for 86 persons and the occupancy at week ending 2 October 2007 was 67. In some instances it is not possible to have full occupancy due to family configuration; for example, a family of three occupying rooms that could accommodate four or five. Aside from this non-occupancy arising from family configuration, there are also seven spaces currently vacant in the centre.

In fulfilling its general accommodation responsibilities, the RIA does not 'lease' premises from commercial contractors. Rather it 'contracts-in' a comprehensive range of services and facilities, which include accommodation, house-keeping, etc., for a fixed sum over the period of the contract. The RIA endeavours to achieve the best value for money in relation to such contracts, in respect of which negotiations can take place with a number of commercial entities. It is not in the interests of the taxpayer that details of individual contracts are made known both to the public and to other parties who are, or may be in the future, engaged in negotiations with the RIA.

appointed by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28171/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The information requested by the Deputy in relation to political appointments that I have made since taking up office is set out in the table.

I am therefore unable to provide, in respect of the premises cited in the question, the detailed financial information requested by the Deputy, as its release could negatively affect the competitive position of the State. I can confirm, however, that the rates are within the normal range of €133-165 per person per week (pppw) for self catering centres.

Departmental Correspondence.

447. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform his views on correspondence (details supplied); the reason for the delay in providing a response; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28188/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I understand that the correspondence referred to by the Deputy was, due to pressure of work, inadvertently overlooked in the relevant section of my Department. I understand however that a reply has now issued.

Visa Applications.

448. **Deputy Michael D'Arcy** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when a decision will be made on an application for green card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; and the expected period of time it will take to complete the processing of same. [28189/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Immigration Division of my Department that the person concerned has permission to remain in the State until the 25th November 2007 on foot of a working holiday visa. It is the case that the criteria of this scheme requires that persons issued with a working holiday visa must leave the State upon the expiry of the 12 month period. I understand that the General Immigration Division of my Department will be in touch with the person concerned outlining the options open to her.

Crime Levels.

449. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of burglaries reported to and recorded at a Garda station (details supplied) in County Kildare; if this number is an increase on those reported and recorded in 2006; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28192/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Following the submission in 2004 of a report and recommendations by an expert group on crime statistics, it was decided that the compilation and publication of crime statistics should be taken over by the Central Statistics Office, as the national statistical agency, from the Garda Síochána. The Garda Síochána Act 2005 consequently makes provision for this and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose. Following the setting up of the necessary technical systems and auditing of the data from which the statistics are compiled, the CSO is now compiling and publishing criminal statistics and has published provisional headline crime statistics since the third quarter of 2006. In addition, it has compiled and published a series of quarterly and annual statistics for the period starting with the first quarter of 2003. I understand that the CSO are examining how the crime statistics published might be expanded and made more comprehensive. I have requested the CSO to provide the statistics sought by the Deputy directly to him.

Garda Stations.

450. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the opening hours of a Garda station (details supplied) in County Kildare; the number of gardaí permanently based at the station; the plans there are to increase the number of gardaí stationed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28193/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Following the submission in 2004 of a report and recommendations by an expert group on crime statistics, it was decided that the compilation and publication of crime statistics should be taken over by the Central Statistics Office, as the national statistical agency, from the Garda Síochána. The Garda Síochána Act 2005 consequently makes provision for this and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose.

Following the setting up of the necessary technical systems and auditing of the data from which the statistics are compiled, the CSO is now compiling and publishing criminal statistics and has published provisional headline crime statistics since the third quarter of 2006. In addition, it has compiled and published a series of quarterly and

annual statistics for the period starting with the first quarter of 2003. I understand that the CSO are examining how the crime statistics published might be expanded and made more comprehensive. I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that the opening hours of Ballymore Eustace Garda Station are Monday — Saturday from 2pm to 4pm. The personnel strength of Ballymore Eustace Garda Station, as of 31 October last, the latest date for which figures are available, was 1.

It is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner to allocate personnel throughout the Force taking everything into account. The situation will be kept under review and when additional personnel next become available the needs of Ballymore Eustace Garda Station will be fully considered by him within the overall context of the needs of Garda Districts/Divisions throughout the country. I have requested the CSO to provide the statistics sought by the Deputy directly to him.

Garda Deployment.

451. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the details involved in the rural policing plan in County Kildare; the number of gardaí attached to this scheme; the stations involved in the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28194/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The 2007 Annual Policing Plan for An Garda Síochána and the 2007 Divisional Policing Plan for the Carlow / Kildare Division are available on the Garda web site — www.garda.ie.

452. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if an additional garda will be appointed to the Garda station at Leighlinbridge, County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28197/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): It is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner to allocate personnel throughout the Force taking everything into account. The situation will be kept under review and when additional personnel next become available the needs of Leighlinbridge Garda Station will be fully considered by him within the overall context of the needs of Garda Districts/Divisions throughout the country.

Public Order Offences.

453. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of anti-social behaviour orders that have been initiated in each of the Dublin policing districts since the legislation was introduced; the number

that have been finalised; the nature of the offences for which the orders were initiated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28201/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan):

Part 11 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006, which provides for civil proceedings in relation to anti-social behaviour by adults, was commenced on 1 January, 2007. Part 13 of the Act relating to anti-social behaviour by children was commenced on 1 March, 2007. These provisions set out an incremental procedure for addressing anti-social behaviour by adults and children. With regard to children, these range from a warning from a member of An Garda Síochána, to a good behaviour contract involving the child and his or her parents or guardian, to referral to the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme and to the making of a behaviour order by the Childrens' Court.

The number of behaviour orders issued in each Garda Division in the Dublin Metropolitan Region is set out in the table. Figures are provisional, operational and liable to change.

Division	Behaviour Warning (Adult)	Behaviour Warning (Child)
DMR North Central	17	2
DMR South Central	83	0
DMR North	8	0
DMR South	24	27
DMR East	6	10
DMR West	58	10

Ministerial Responsibilities.

454. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the duties and responsibilities of the Minister of State with special responsibility for integration policy at his

Division	Station	31/12/04	31/12/05	31/12/06	31/10/07
DMR South Central	Kevin Street	119	122	127	137
	Kilmainham	81	81	87	86
	Pearse St	252	253	260	261
	Harcourt Tce	77	74	85	83
	Donnybrook	125	121	125	129
	Irishtown	57	56	54	58
DMR North Central	Store St.	269	271	281	288
	Bridewell	166	162	165	176
	Fitzgibbon St	119	119	118	119
	Mountjoy	91	90	92	96
DMR South	Crumlin	87	87	98	104
	Sundrive Rd	65	65	73	75
	Rathfarnham	76	70	72	75

Department; the budget allocated to the same Minister of State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28211/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan):

Mr. Conor Lenihan, T.D. was appointed Minister of State at the Departments of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Education and Science and Justice Equality and Law Reform, with special responsibility for Integration Policy. The Minister has a cross Departmental mandate to develop, drive and co-ordinate integration policy across other Government Departments, agencies and services.

The Minister will be involved in the development of a long-term national policy on integration which will be informed by widespread consultation at a national level, properly structured objective research and international experience. The budget for the Office of the Minister is being developed in the context of 2008 Budget Estimates.

Garda Deployment.

455. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí based at each station in the Dublin region for the years 2004, 2005, 2006 and to date in 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28214/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan):

The information requested by the Deputy is contained in the table. The latest readily available figures for 2007 are as at 31 October.

It is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner to allocate personnel throughout the Force taking everything into account. The situation will be kept under review and when additional personnel next become available the needs of the Dublin Divisions will be fully considered by him within the overall context of the needs of Garda Districts/Divisions throughout the country.

[Deputy Ruairí Quinn.]

Division	Station	31/12/04	31/12/05	31/12/06	31/10/07
DMR North	Tallaght	173	167	178	175
	Rathmines	72	70	76	71
	Terenure	91	97	98	101
	Santry	107	119	130	113
	Whitehall	35	34	40	44
	Ballymun	65	62	56	75
	Dublin Airport	24	21	21	23
	Coolock	84	88	98	114
	Malahide	40	40	45	47
	Swords	68	65	68	78
	Raheny	66	59	69	69
DMR West	Clontarf	69	63	71	67
	Howth	44	49	42	41
	Blanchardstown	152	167	174	173
	Cabra	63	69	68	70
	Finglas	74	76	87	88
	Lucan	74	68	70	82
	Leixlip	28	25	25	24
	Ronanstown	82	88	92	87
	Ballyfermot	81	80	88	85
	Clondalkin	76	81	92	99
	Rathcoole	28	25	23	24
DMR East	Dun Laoghaire	104	99	96	103
	Dalkey	26	26	26	32
	Kill-O-Grange	35	33	35	33
	Cabinteely	41	39	38	38
	Bray	85	88	103	98
	Enniskerry	5	5	5	7
	Shankhill	61	60	63	63
	Greystones	28	29	35	42
	Blackrock	68	75	79	82
	Dundrum	68	75	76	76
	Stepaside	31	29	35	32

Garda Training.

456. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the present capacity of the Garda driving and training school; his plans to increase its capacity to take on the work of providing adequate driving training courses for the planned additional traffic corps appointees over the next 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28215/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that An Garda Síochána has two Driving Schools, one based at Garda Headquarters and one based at the Garda College. Both Driving Schools have had significant personnel increases in 2007 to respond to the increased need for Driver Training. The staffing

level at the Garda Headquarters Driving School and the Garda College Driving School increased from 13 to 15 and 15 to 23 respectively. This increase in personnel has resulted in an increase of 100% in the output of driving courses being provided.

It is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner to allocate personnel throughout the force taking everything into account. The situation will be kept under review and when additional personnel next become available the needs of the Garda Driving Schools will be fully considered by him within the overall context of the needs of Divisions throughout the country.

Road Traffic Offences.

457. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of persons detected, prosecuted and convicted for failing to have their vehicle undergo

a mandatory national car test for each year since the commencement of the test to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28216/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the enforcement of the National Car Test Regulations by An Garda Síochána is based on the following three types of offences, valid NCT disc not displayed, using a vehicle without an NCT certificate and failing to produce an NCT test certificate. The tables show the number of proceedings commenced and convictions recorded for these offences.

Valid NCT disc not displayed

Year	Proceedings commenced	Convictions
2001	22	6
2002	1,089	293
2003	3,197	850
2004	4,170	1,011
2005	6,690	1,521
2006	8,625	1,511
*2007 (up to the 6 November 2007)	6,606	286

Using a vehicle without an NCT certificate

Year	Proceedings commenced	Convictions
2001	23	3
2002	960	287
2003	2,888	828
2004	4,088	1,059
2005	6,747	1,747
2006	10,034	2,027
*2007 (up to the 6 November 2007)	8,195	355

Failing to produce an NCT test certificate

Year	Proceedings commenced	Convictions
2001	52	10
2002	796	193
2003	2,384	523
2004	3,650	724
2005	5,725	1,057
2006	8,612	1,161
*2007 (up to 6 November 2007)	7,031	205

*Figures provided for 2007 are provisional, operational and liable to change.

Crime Levels.

458. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the car theft offences recorded and detailed for each of the districts in County Mayo for 2002 and 2003; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28217/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Following the submission in 2004 of a report and recommendations by an expert group on crime statistics, it was decided that the compilation and publication of crime statistics should be taken over by the Central Statistics Office, as the national statistical agency, from the Garda Síochána. The Garda Síochána Act 2005 consequently makes provision for this and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose. Following the setting up of the necessary technical systems and auditing of the data from which the statistics are compiled, the CSO is now compiling and publishing criminal statistics and has published provisional headline crime statistics since the third quarter of 2006. In addition, it has compiled and published a series of quarterly and annual statistics for the period starting with the first quarter of 2003. I understand that the CSO are examining how the crime statistics published might be expanded and made more comprehensive. I have requested the CSO to provide the statistics sought by the Deputy directly to him.

Garda Strength.

459. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of full-time members of the Garda Síochána as of 31 October 2007. [28218/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The number of attested members of An Garda Síochána as of 31 October 2007, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 13,513. There is a total of 1,075 Student Gardaí, 279 in Phase 1, 515 in Phase 2 and 281 in Phase 3. I am also informed by the Garda Commissioner that in addition to this there is a total of 247 Garda Reserve members, 171 of which are attested.

Garda Deployment.

460. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of staff at the Garda Vetting Unit in Thurles; if it is intended to increase this number; and if so, when same will occur. [28219/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The current staffing level of the Garda Central Vetting Unit, based in Thurles, Co. Tipperary, is 48, comprising 5 members of the Garda Síochána and 43 civil ser-

[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

vants. I am pleased to state that an additional 26 civil servants will be appointed to the GCVU in the coming weeks, which is further to an additional 12 civil servants who commenced work in the GCVU in September 2007. This substantial increase in staff numbers is to facilitate the continuing significant expansion in the employee vetting service provided by the GCVU, as a means of promoting, inter alia, the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

Citizenship Applications.

461. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will use his discretionary power to grant citizenship by way of naturalisation to persons (details supplied) in view of the fact that their mother, an Irish citizen by descent as a grand-daughter of Irish-born immigrants, formally acquired Irish citizenship in 1989, after the passage of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1986 which denies them citizenship on residency grounds; if he will take into account the anomalous situation that such children born after 1986 could be registered in the Foreign Births Entry Book and granted Irish citizenship by right; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28223/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I assume the Deputy's question refers to Argentinian nationals whose only direct lineal ancestor to have been born in Ireland was a great-grandparent. My Department has been engaged in extensive correspondence over the last number of years in relation to the question of Irish citizenship for the three individuals concerned and the broader issue of Irish citizenship for Argentinian nationals of Irish descent.

The position is that the great-grandchildren of persons born in Ireland can obtain Irish citizenship by registering in the Foreign Births Register provided either of their parents had at the time of their birth acquired Irish citizenship through registration in the Foreign Births Register. There is one exception to that rule. If one parent had registered in the Foreign Births Register prior to 31 December 1986, their child can register even if the parent had not registered at the time of that person's birth.

If persons are not entitled to Irish citizenship in these circumstances, they can apply for Irish citizenship through naturalisation. Such applications are considered under the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Acts 1956 — 2004. The applicant must fulfil certain statutory requirements including requirements in relation to residency. However I am empowered to dispense with the statutory conditions in whole or in part in certain circumstances — for example where the applicant is of Irish descent or Irish associations. Every

such application is decided upon on its individual circumstances and in accordance with the law.

The three persons referred to in the Deputy's question lodged applications for naturalisation in 2002. Having considered all of the information available at that time, the three applications were refused. It is, of course, open to the individuals to apply again for naturalisation at any time in the future. Any such applications will be considered in the context of the legislation in force at that time.

Garda Operations.

462. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will put in place a safety and security plan at a location (details supplied). [28231/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the location concerned is in Coolock Garda District and is patrolled by Garda foot and mobile patrols from that Garda station. Members of the local Community Policing Unit are also allocated to this area and liaise with management of the location referred to, providing crime prevention and security advice.

I am also informed that local Garda management is aware of anti-social behaviour and public order offences in the area concerned. These incidents are under active investigation, which has resulted in a number of arrests for public order offences, criminal damage and possession of controlled substances. An incident relating to a robbery of a premises has also been detected, and a person is currently before the courts relating to that incident.

Patrols of the area are carried out by uniform and plain clothes Garda patrols, including the District Detective and Drug Units, the Community Policing Unit and the Mountain Bike Units, supplemented as necessary by the Divisional Crime Task Force and Traffic Corps.

Asylum Applications.

463. **Deputy Chris Andrews** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will grant a person (details supplied) in Dublin 14 leave to remain in the country on humanitarian grounds as outlined in previous correspondence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28248/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The person concerned arrived in the State on 17 January, 2000 and applied for asylum. His application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

On 5 November, 2002 he was informed by letter, that in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999, as amended, the Minister proposed to make a deportation order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State; leaving the State before an order is made or consenting to the making of a deportation order. Representations were received on behalf of the person in question.

On 10 January, 2007 an application for Subsidiary Protection in accordance with regulations known as the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, S.I. 518 of 2006 which came into force on 10 October, 2006 was received on behalf of the person concerned and this will be considered in due course. In the event that the subsidiary protection application is refused, the case file of the person concerned, including all representations submitted, will be considered under Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act, 1999, as amended, and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (Prohibition of Refoulement).

464. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the progress on the application of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 2 for temporary leave to remain in the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28252/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The person concerned arrived in the State on 15th January, 2007 and applied for asylum on the 16th February 2007. She was notified on the 15th March 2007 that her application had been refused following consideration of her case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner. She did not appeal the recommendation. The person in question made an application through the International Organisation for Migration to voluntarily return to her country of origin on 29th March, 2007. However, she withdrew the application on 11th June, 2007.

On 26th April, 2007 she was informed by letter, that in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999, as amended, the Minister proposed to make a deportation order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why she should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State; leaving the State before an order is made or consenting to the making of a deportation order. In addition, she was notified that she was eligible to apply for Subsidiary Protection in accordance with regulations known as the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, S.I. 518 of 2006 which came into force on 10 October, 2006. Representations were

received on behalf of the person concerned. An incomplete application for Subsidiary Protection in the State, which was received on behalf of the person concerned, was returned to her with a request that she submit a completed application. To date no further application for Subsidiary Protection has been received from the person concerned.

The case file of the person concerned, including all representations submitted, will be considered under Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act, 1999, as amended, and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (Prohibition of Refoulement), as amended. I expect the file to be passed to me for decision in due course.

Closed Circuit Television Systems.

465. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if there are plans to provide closed circuit television facilities in Mullinahone, County Tipperary. [28261/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Community-based CCTV Scheme was put in place in June 2005 in response to a demonstrated demand from local communities across Ireland for CCTV systems. It is designed to provide financial assistance from my Department to qualifying local organisations towards meeting the capital costs associated with the establishment of local, community-run CCTV systems. The scheme operates at two levels: initial funding for the assessment of needs and substantive funding for fully developed proposals. Matching funding for RAPID areas is available from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Pobal has been engaged to administer the Scheme on behalf of my Department.

I have been informed by Pobal that to date no application has been received under the Community-based CCTV Scheme from any group in Mullinahone, County Tipperary. I am committed to the further expansion of the community-based CCTV around the country and this process is ongoing. It is intended to invite applications for funding under the Community-based CCTV Scheme periodically and it will be open to any group to submit an application for funding. Further details of the scheme and relevant documentation are available at my Department's website (www.justice.ie) or at Pobal's website (www.pobal.ie).

Coroners Service.

466. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the average waiting time for inquests in each county; if he has received requests from coroners for additional support to allow them to carry out inquests earlier; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28262/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I can inform the Deputy that Coroners are employed by Local Authorities to perform independent quasi-judicial functions and do not operate under the day to day direction of my Department. There is regular contact between representatives of the Coroners and my Department, particularly with respect to proposals for reform and modernisation of the service contained in the Coroners Bill, 2007, but my Department does not have a role in providing funding to the service under the current legislation.

Insofar as waiting times are concerned, I understand that the timeframe between the death of a person and the holding of any necessary inquest is dependent on a number of factors, including the receipt by the Coroner of the results of the post-mortem, as well as any tests carried out as part of the post-mortem process. In these circumstances it is not possible to estimate a meaningful average timeframe.

Garda Stations.

467. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if a decision has been made on the proposal to relocate the Cork north divisional Garda headquarters from Fermoy to Mallow; if he will confirm that land has been purchased to the rear of Mallow Garda station to facilitate this move; if there are plans to upgrade the existing Fermoy Garda station in view of the fact that the station will require additional personnel should the new prison proposed for Kilworth go ahead; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28265/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Garda authorities that a brief of requirements for Mallow Garda Station is being drawn up and will be forwarded to the Office of Public Works, which has responsibility for the provision, refurbishment and maintenance of Garda buildings. I am further informed by the Office of Public Works that the land adjoining Mallow Garda Station is State-owned. I am also informed by the Garda authorities that Fermoy Garda Station will be refurbished.

The detailed allocation of Garda resources is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner. Garda personnel assignments throughout the country, together with overall policing arrangements and operational requirements such as the location of detention facilities, are monitored and reviewed by Garda management to ensure that optimum use is made of Garda resources, and the best possible Garda service is provided to the general public.

Citizenship Applications.

468. **Deputy Chris Andrews** asked the Minister

for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the status of an application for a certificate of naturalisation for a person (details supplied) from Dublin 18; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28380/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): An application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's question was received in the Citizenship Section of my Department on the 21 March 2007. Officials in that Section are currently processing applications received in the beginning of 2005 and have approximately 12,400 applications on hand to be dealt with before that of the person concerned. These are generally dealt with in chronological order as this is deemed to be the fairest to all applicants. It is likely, therefore, that further processing of the application will commence in the second half of 2009. I will inform the Deputy and the person in question when a decision is reached in the case.

Children Act

469. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if the gardaí will have available to them the provisions of the Children Act 2001 whereby parents may be held to account in court for the actions of their children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28393/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I can confirm that all provisions of the Children Act 2001 have been commenced and are therefore at the disposal of all agencies involved in the criminal justice system, including An Garda Síochána. The Deputy may wish to note that Parts 8 and 9 of the Act contain a number of general provisions in relation to parental responsibility including a requirement for parents to attend all hearings in the Children Court regarding their children, for the Court to impose a parental supervision order, and in certain cases to pay compensation.

Visa Applications.

470. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, further to Parliamentary Question No. 444 of 6 November 2007, the errors which applicants frequently make when applying for such a visa; the documentation which is frequently omitted by the applicant which delays the processing of such applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28414/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The experience of the Visa Office in processing applications for D-type visas is that applicants often overlook to include all the documents required to accompany such applications. This can lead to refusal of the appli-

ation or, at the very least, a substantial delay in processing. The website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service www.inis.gov.ie lists the documentation required to accompany visa applications.

471. **Deputy Niall Blaney** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will intervene on behalf of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28450/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The person in question entered the State on 16 November, 2002 on foot of a work permit. He resigned from his employment in October, 2005 and therefore had no legal reason to remain in the State. On 4 October, 2006 the person in question signed a declaration of consent to deportation which was witnessed by a member of An Garda Síochána. A request was then made to my Department by An Garda Síochána requesting the making of a deportation order.

On receipt of this request the case of the person concerned was examined under section 3(6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 as amended, and section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 on the Prohibition of Refoulement. On 25th November, 2006 my predecessor refused temporary leave to remain in the State and a deportation order was signed in respect of the person concerned. Notice of this order was subsequently served by members of An Garda Síochána by hand on the person concerned in Castlerea Prison, in order for him to make travel arrangements for his deportation from the State.

A consent for deportation order as served on the person concerned is only valid for 3 months pursuant to section 3 subsection 8 of the Immigration Act 1999. This deportation order has since expired. A fresh notice to deport letter was issued by An Garda Síochána by hand to the person concerned in Castlerea Prison on 14th March 2007. Fresh representations were received from the person concerned by my Department on 26th March 2007.

As the case of the person concerned is still under consideration under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 his passport cannot be returned at this stage. This person's case file will be examined under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996. I expect the file to be submitted to me for a decision in due course.

472. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if an application for a stamp one visa by a person (details supplied) in Dublin 4 will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28530/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The person in question made an application for residence in the State on the basis of a proposal to operate a software business in the State in September 2007 and was refused by letter of the 16 October 2007. Among the criteria for obtaining permission to operate a viable trading concern in the State is, (a) that the proposed business must result in the transfer to the State of a minimum capital investment of €300,000 and (b) the proposed business must create employment for at least two EEA nationals for a new project. The applicant did not provide any supporting documentation to show he meets with (a) or (b) above. The Immigration Operations Section of my Department has reviewed this application and is of the view that on the basis of the information supplied that the person in question remains a student and does not meet the criteria for residence in the State on the basis of the Business Permission Scheme as currently constituted.

Sexual Offences.

473. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the situation regarding sexual assault on people with an intellectual disability. [28547/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I assume that the Deputy's Question arises in the context of a recent decision in the Dublin Circuit Court. As I have already mentioned to the House I am examining the implications of that decision to ascertain whether any legislative change is required.

Proposed Legislation.

474. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding the Mental Capacity and Guardianship Bill 2007. [28548/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Government's Legislation Programme, which was announced by the Chief Whip on 25 September 2007, indicates that the Mental Capacity Bill is due for publication in 2008. The relevant legislative proposals are at an advanced stage of preparation in my Department and will be submitted to Government for approval in the near future.

Garda Deployment.

475. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí assigned to the Garda station in Pettigo, County Donegal; if there are plans to have a Garda patrol car attached to the station to replace the one which was maliciously burned in the summer of 2004; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28588/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that on 31 October 2007, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the personnel strength of Pettigo Garda Station, County Donegal was one. There is no official vehicle currently allocated to Pettigo. It is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner to allocate personnel throughout the force taking everything into account. The situation will be kept under review and when additional personnel next become available the needs of the Pettigo Garda Station will be fully considered by him within the overall context of the needs of Garda Stations throughout the country.

Immigration Policy.

476. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of non-EEA citizen children between the ages of 16 and 18 who are registered with the Garda National Immigration Bureau; the stamps issued on the minor child's certificate of registration upon registration with the GNIB; the policy considerations for issuing of stamp two, as an international student, to children between the ages of 16 and 18 who are resident in the State for a considerable time and whose parents who have applied for and are probably eligible for long-term residency or citizenship; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28589/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The number of non-EEA national children between the ages of 16 and 18 who are registered with the Garda National Immigration Bureau is 1,672. A non-EEA national child on reaching the age of 16 years must register his/her presence in the State. In line with all immigration decisions each case is considered on its own merits. A registration officer upon registration of the child will have regard to the particular circumstances of the child including the immigration status of the child's parents. In the main, non-EEA children who are in the State as dependants of foreign national parents on reaching 16 years of age are given stamp 2 or 2A. The issuance of stamp 2 or 2A is in line with current policy as the children are present in the State as students.

Applications made by the parents of such children for long-term residence or citizenship do not in themselves confer any automatic residence rights to the child while the application process is being carried out. As the Deputy may be aware, it is my intention to provide in the forthcoming Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill for the registration of all foreign nationals including those under 16 years of age. In that context, it is my intention to carry out a review of all current immigration stamps.

Asylum Applications.

477. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the status of the asylum applications of persons (details supplied). [28602/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The first named person submitted an application for asylum to the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner on 5 April 2006. That application was subsequently deemed withdrawn, a Deportation Order was signed by the Minister and the matter is now the subject of Judicial Review proceedings. The second named person submitted an application for asylum to the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner on 20 January 2005. This application was refused and this refusal decision was subsequently affirmed by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

On 14 March 2005 the second named individual applied for permission to remain in the State under the revised arrangements for parents of Irish-born children born prior to 1 January 2005, commonly referred to as the IBC/05 scheme. This application was refused as the individual concerned did not meet the continuous residency criteria of the scheme. Judicial review proceedings have been initiated in respect of this refusal. My Department is currently appealing a number of matters related to the IBC/05 scheme, including the issue of continuous residence, to the Supreme Court. The application in question may be considered further in light of the findings of the Court.

478. **Deputy Mary O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will review the case of a person (details supplied) in County Louth who seeks to remain here on humanitarian and subsidiary protection grounds. [28603/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The person concerned arrived in the State on 12 August 2005 and applied for asylum on the 15 August 2005. His application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999, as amended, he was informed by letter dated 17 January 2007 that the Minister proposed to make a deportation order in respect of him.

He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State; leaving the State before an order is made or consenting to the making of a deportation order. In addition, he was notified that he was eligible to apply for Subsidiary Protection in

accordance with regulations known as the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, S.I. 518 of 2006, which came into force on 10 October 2006. The person concerned submitted an application for temporary leave to remain in the State and for Subsidiary Protection in the State and these applications will be considered in due course. If the subsidiary protection application is refused, the case file of the person concerned, including all representations submitted, will be considered under section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999, as amended, and section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (Prohibition of Refoulement).

479. **Deputy Mary O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will reconsider the case of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath whose family has suffered a dreadful catastrophe recently. [28604/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): It is not the practice to comment in detail on individual asylum applications. As the Deputy will be aware, applications for refugee status in the State are determined by an independent process comprising the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and the Refugee Appeals Tribunal which make recommendations to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on whether such status should be granted. A final decision on this application will be made on receipt of the decision of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

Garda Deployment.

480. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí, including their rank, assigned to a Garda station (details supplied) in County Cork. [28615/07]

481. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí, including their rank, assigned to a Garda station (details supplied) in County Cork. [28616/07]

482. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí, including their rank, assigned to a Garda station (details supplied) in County Cork. [28617/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 480 to 482, inclusive, together.

As of 31 October last, the latest date for which figures are readily available, 24 members of the force were based at Douglas Garda station — five sergeants and 19 gardaí. On the same date, 20 members of the force were based at Carrigaline

Garda station — three sergeants and 17 gardaí and four members of the force were based at Passage West Garda station — one sergeant and three gardaí. Over the three stations, there were nine sergeants and 39 gardaí, making a total Garda strength in the area of 48. The Deputy will appreciate that, as with any large organisation, on any given day the overall strength of the organisation may fluctuate due to retirements, resignations etc.

It is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner to allocate personnel throughout the force taking everything into account. The situation will be kept under review and when additional personnel next become available the needs of these Garda stations and the areas they cover will be fully considered by him within the overall context of the needs of Garda divisions throughout the country.

483. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of full-time and part-time gardaí on active service in each county for each year in the past decade; and if he will provide this as a table laying out part-time and full-time separately for each county. [28632/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the information requested by the Deputy could only be obtained by the disproportionate expenditure of Garda time and resources relative to the information sought. However, the total personnel strength of the Garda Síochána on 30 September 2007 was 13,531 and the total personnel strength of Garda personnel job sharing on 30 September 2007 was 133 — 66.5 wholetime equivalents.

Garda Retirements.

484. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí who have retired in each county for every year since 1992; and if he will provide this information as a table. [28633/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the information requested in relation to the number of gardaí who have retired in each county for every year since 1992 is not readily available and can only be obtained by the disproportionate expenditure of Garda time and resources relative to the information sought. The total number of retirements from the Garda Síochána in each year from 1997 to 2006 is as follows: 1997, 284; 1998, 264; 1999, 260; 2000, 282; 2001, 238; 2002, 343; 2003, 339; 2004, 412; 2005, 383; and 2006, 304.

Garda Deployment.

485. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of full-time gardaí dedicated solely to dealing with the problem of drugs in County Tipperary. [28634/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that the strength of the Divisional Drugs Unit in Tipperary, as of 31 December 2006, the latest date for which figures are readily available was seven. All gardaí have responsibility, *inter alia*, for dealing with drug related issues as and when they arise. The Deputy will appreciate that, as with any large organisation, on any given day the overall strength of the organisation may fluctuate due, for example, to retirements, resignations, etc. It is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner to allocate personnel throughout the force taking everything into account. The situation will be kept under review and when additional personnel next become available the needs of the Divisional Drug Units will be fully considered by him within the overall context of the needs of Garda Divisions throughout the country.

Closed Circuit Television Systems.

486. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when Ennis, County Clare will be provided with a closed circuit television system; the reason for the delay in providing CCTV to Ennis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28636/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Garda Síochána is expanding its town centre CCTV programme and Ennis is one of the 14 new locations where Garda CCTV systems will be installed. I have been informed by the Garda authorities that tenders for the provision of a CCTV system for Ennis have been evaluated and it is expected that a contract for installation of the system will be awarded in the coming weeks. Once contracts are in place, work will commence on the installation of the CCTV system, subject to planning permissions, wayleaves and any civil works required. It is expected that the system in Ennis will become operational during 2008. Earlier this year the Garda authorities carried out a project involving three locations and included the use of wireless and digital technologies. Evaluation of these technologies was required to be completed before progressing to procurement for further locations.

Court Procedures.

487. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if there is provision whereby representatives of a local community may apply to the court to make a victim

impact statement in the case of a person charged with a serious offence who has subjected that community to sustained serious anti-social behaviour and intimidation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28647/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Deputy's question calls for a consideration of the definition of "victim" in the context of victim impact statements and raises the question of whether the definition should be extended to such an extent that, in at least some instances, the local community could be regarded as a "victim". The relevant legislation on the issue, section 5 of the Criminal Justice Act 1993, foresees that only those directly affected by the crime may be regarded as victims. The section specifies that a victim impact statement may be delivered by or on behalf of the living victim of a variety of crimes that are listed in that section.

However, no legislative provision exists that permits the family, friends or other associates of a victim to give or make a statement. Nevertheless, a practice has developed, especially in homicide cases, by which a sentencing judge may exercise a discretion to permit a victim impact statement to be made by or on behalf of the family or friends of a victim (as, of course, the direct victim is not alive). I have asked the Department to reflect on the question of victim impact statements, taking account not only of issues raised by the recent debate on the subject but also of the recommendations of the Balance in the Criminal Law Review Group, chaired by Dr. Gerard Hogan SC, in its report earlier this year.

The Review Group made a number of very helpful comments. In relation to the current arrangements under section 5 of the 1993 Act, it suggested the section may be too restrictive in so far as it permits a statement by or on behalf of the direct victim only. It suggests there is a case for expanding the definition of 'victim' to include other persons intimately affected by the crime. The Review Group also goes on to discuss the possible use of victim impact statements at the parole or remission stage and places this issue in the context of restorative justice, i.e. the victim would have an opportunity to address the perpetrator directly, to make him or her realise more fully the harm that has been done.

In a further recommendation, the Review Group addressed the possibility of inappropriate use of statements and raised the possibility of restrictions on publication in certain circumstances, at the direction of the court. I will continue to reflect on and consider how the current system can be improved. In my considerations, I will wish to ensure that the victim is allowed as much opportunity as reasonably possible to have his or her experiences taken into account. I must also ensure that, in the interests of all parties, we

preserve the integrity of the criminal process and that due process continues to be observed. The Deputy will appreciate the issues involved are complex and require careful consideration. It will therefore be necessary to take some time to ensure any proposals are appropriate and well grounded.

Citizenship Applications.

488. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the necessary conditions that a person (details supplied) would need to fulfil to obtain Irish citizenship. [28648/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, provides that the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform may, in his absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation provided certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. In the case of a non-national applicant who is the spouse of an Irish citizen those conditions are that the applicant must — be of full age, be of good character, be married to the Irish citizen for at least 3 years, be in a marriage recognised under the laws of the State as subsisting, be living together as husband and wife with the Irish spouse, have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the island of Ireland immediately before the date of the application, and during the four years immediately preceding that period, have had a total residence in the island of Ireland amounting to two years, intend in good faith to continue to reside in the island of Ireland after naturalisation, and have made, either before a judge of the District Court in open Court or in such a manner as the Minister, for special reasons allows, a declaration in the prescribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State. It is open to the person in question to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when she is in a position to meet the statutory requirements.

Question No. 489 answered with Question No. 424.

Residency Permits.

490. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if, in view of the fact that leave to remain in Ireland for a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary expires on 15 November 2007, he will arrange for a decision to be made in this case as soon as possible; and the status of the individual if no decision is made before that date. [28726/07]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Immigration Division of my Department has been in contact with

the person concerned granting her permission to remain in the State.

Housing Management Companies.

491. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if legislation governing management companies will facilitate the transfer in newly completed housing estates of responsibility for essential public services such as water, sewage, roads, lighting and common open spaces to the control of the local authority and restrict the use of management companies in traditional housing estates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28131/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): As stated in the reply to Question No. 263 of 24 October 2007, the introduction of legislation relating to the governing of management companies is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Planning and Development Act 2000 sets the statutory framework within which planning authorities must take estates in charge. In addition to the legal framework, my Department has also issued comprehensive policy guidance on the taking in charge of estates.

In circular letter PD1/06, Planning Authorities were reminded of their responsibilities in this area and were asked, as a priority, to establish a policy on taking in charge to be approved by the members of the authority and to be reported on to the members on a regular basis or at least once annually. In July 2006, my Department's circular letter PD5/06 to Planning Authorities stated that conditions requiring management companies should not be attached to planning permissions for traditional housing estates — estates of houses with individual private gardens — except in very specific circumstances. Such circumstances would include, for example, the maintenance of a particular service or shared facility that is provided for residents' use only, such as a playground.

The circular acknowledged, however, that the question of who should be responsible for the maintenance of certain shared facilities in newer types of mixed estates needed further examination. Accordingly, my Department established a Working Group, including representatives of local authorities, architects, planners and consumer interests, to consider this and other issues related to the taking in charge of estates. The Group considered the issue of responsibility for the maintenance of common shared facilities in residential estates including small open spaces, car parking and playgrounds, and also looked at issues relating to the completion of estates and the taking in charge process. The Group has completed its work and has produced suggested draft policy guidance for my consideration. I have

[Deputy John Gormley.]

asked my Department to re-examine a number of issues, particularly in the context of the new programme for Government, and I expect this process to be completed shortly.

Wildlife Protection.

492. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the reason the gardaí claim that they do not have powers to prevent the illegal hunting of wild hares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28050/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The Wildlife (Wild Mammals) (Open Seasons) Order, 2005 allows hares to be hunted between 26 September and 28 February. The manner of hunting allowed during this annual open season is shooting with firearms, coursing at regulated coursing matches or hunting under licence with packs of beagles and harriers. Any other form of hunting hares is illegal and is an offence under Section 23 of the Wildlife Act, 1976 (as amended). Under Section 72 of the Wildlife Act, 1976 (as amended) a member of the Garda Síochána who has reasonable grounds for suspecting that a person has committed an offence under any provision of the Wildlife Acts, 1976 and 2000, may, at all reasonable times, stop and search any person who is suspected by the Garda of being in any way concerned in the offence.

A member of the Garda can require the person to give their name and address and to declare and/or produce any specimen of fauna or relevant licence or permission, and the Garda may seize and retain any such specimen which might be required as evidence in any proceedings for an offence. This section also provides that a member of the Garda may, if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting from the activity of any person, that an offence under any provision of the Wildlife Acts, is being, or has been, committed, require that person to desist from continuing or recommencing that activity, and to furnish their name and address and, if requested, to verify the information given. Gardaí also have the authority to arrest or to assist in arresting a suspected person if that person continues or recommences that activity or fails to furnish their name or address or furnishes a name or address which, in the circumstances, there are reasonable grounds to suspect is false or misleading.

Departmental Reports.

493. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the terms of reference, the membership and the report date of the Task Force on Dublin Bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28069/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The programme for Government contains a commitment to establish a Dublin Bay Area Task Force to maximise the potential of the bay for the people of the capital city. I am considering the scope, terms of reference, structure and composition of the Task Force. I expect to finalise arrangements for its establishment before the end of the year, and convene its first meeting as shortly as possible thereafter.

Social and Affordable Housing.

494. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if consideration has been given to changing the claw-back system for people who bought a home under the affordable housing scheme operated by Dublin City Council and who are now selling that home to buy a larger or smaller property still within the affordable housing scheme, to allow them to avoid paying the claw-back as they are still within the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28093/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Houses sold to first time buyers under the various affordable housing schemes at a significant discount from market value contain a clawback provision, in order to prevent short-term profit taking on the resale of the house, to the detriment of the objectives of the schemes. As there is no provision in the affordable housing schemes that allow households switch accommodation from one affordable unit to another, the question of changing the clawback to facilitate these transfers does not arise. While there are no plans at present to alter the terms of the schemes, I am committed to keeping them under review.

Local Authority Housing.

495. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government when he will to agree to or when he will make a decision on Dublin City Council’s scheme of lettings which had been submitted in 2006 for approval; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28094/07]

496. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that within Dublin City Council’s scheme of letting submitted for approval in 2006 there is a proposal to address a breach of equality legislation which the Equality Tribunal had requested Dublin City Council to address at that time; and that, because of the delay in getting ministerial approval, single applicants or single parents are being discriminated

against by Dublin City Council under its current scheme of lettings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28095/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 495 and 496 together.

In April 2005, my Department approved the scheme of letting priorities submitted by Dublin City Council, subject to certain conditions. One of these conditions related to the proposal to award equal points in the allocation of housing to the applicant and their partner. My Department requested the City Council to provide further justification for the change and to review its position following a further period of at least one year operating the existing provisions.

In 2006, Dublin City Council resubmitted the proposal following which the Department sought an update on the status of the Council’s overall review of its scheme of letting priorities. My Department awaits a submission from the Council in this regard; it is understood that the review involved has not yet been completed.

Fire Service.

497. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if European Union funds were used for all or any portion of the costs of the Bray fire station and training centre built in the 1980s as a dedicated fire service facility, and which houses one full-time fire service officer; if EU funds were used, the programme under which they were made available; the stipulations that were put on the use of those funds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28096/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

Name	Title	Salary Scale
Dan Pender	Press Officer	Principal Officer
Pat Daly	Special Adviser to Minister Martin Cullen	Principal Officer
Sean Dower	Personal Assistant to Minister Martin Cullen	Higher Executive Officer
Inez O’Neill	Personal Secretary to Minister Martin Cullen	Secretarial Assistant
Deirdre Heaney	Personal Assistant to Minister of State Noel Ahern	Higher Executive Officer
Siobhan McGrath	Personal Secretary to Minister of State Noel Ahern	Secretarial Assistant
Sinead McGowan	Personal Assistant to Minister of State Pat the Cope Gallagher	Higher Executive Officer
Aideen Gillen	Personal Secretary to Minister of State Pat the Cope Gallagher	Secretarial Assistant

In addition to the above each Minister of State had one Civilian Driver with an annual salary of €26,243.40.

Pay scales for administrative grades are available on the Department of Finance website (www.finance.gov.ie). The pay scale, in November 2002, for Secretarial Assistants was in the range €17,469.34 to €32,475.76.

(Deputy Tony Killeen): The provision of a fire service is a statutory function of the individual fire authorities and the Department has no direct role in this matter. The Department supports the local fire authorities through the setting of general policy, the provision of capital funding, the issue of guidance to fire authorities in relation to fire prevention, training support and operational matters and other such initiatives. The Department has not used European Union funds for all, or any portion, of the capital or other costs of Bray Fire Station and Training Centre.

Water and Sewerage Schemes.

498. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if plans have been submitted by Kildare County Council in relation to the provision of a new sewerage scheme (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28097/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I refer to the reply to Question No. 314 of 10 October 2007.

Ministerial Staff.

499. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by his Department on 1 November 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28152/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table.

500. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28167/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The

information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table.

Name	Title	Salary Scale
Ryan Meade	Special Adviser	Principal Officer
David Healy	Special Adviser	Principal Officer
Liam Reid	Special Adviser, Press & Information Officer	Principal Officer
Donal Geoghegan*	Special Adviser, Programme Manager for the Green Party	Deputy Secretary
Diarmuid Hanafin	Personal Assistant	Higher Executive Officer
Ann O'Conarain**	Personal Secretary	Executive Officer
Linda Farrell**	Personal Secretary	Executive Officer

*Mr. Geoghegan's salary is paid from my Department's vote but he is based in the Department of the Taoiseach.

**Ms O'Conarain and Ms. Farrell job share the post of Personal Secretary.

The salary scales for all administrative grades are available on the Department of Finance website (www.finance.gov.ie).

Architectural Heritage.

501. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will extend the closing date for completion of work under the national conservation grant scheme and in particular for the applicants that have applied for assistance for the thatching of dwellings in designated conservation areas in view of the difficulties that the applicants are having in respect of the implementation of the works due to the shortage of thatchers and the strict time-frames associated with the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28198/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): My Department funds a scheme of grants to assist owners and occupiers to carry out conservation works on structures of architectural significance which are listed in the Record of Protected Structures contained in a local authority development plan. The scheme is operated by local authorities who are reimbursed annually by my Department. The deadline for submission of claims by local authorities for reimbursement this year is 30 November.

My Department operates a separate grant scheme which generally funds two thirds of the approved cost (up to specified maximum limits) of renovating thatched roofs of owner occupied houses. There is no deadline for claiming approved grant assistance under the scheme.

Planning Issues.

502. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his views on amending the legislation which includes a provision for a pre-application consultation by developers with the public on significant developments or strategic devel-

opments, and to extend this provision to include large but not strategic infrastructure developments which will have a significant impact on the local community; if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties created for both developers and local communities when a large development is applied for without prior consultation with the local residents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28199/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I refer to the reply to Question No. 561 of 31 October. I do not think it would be either appropriate or practical for pre-application consultations to become mandatorily required for all prospective developments of the type referred to in the Question. The provisions in relation to pre-application consultations between planning authorities and prospective applicants already contained in Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, combined with the very extensive public notification and participation provisions set out under planning legislation detailed in the previous above reply mentioned provides a robust framework for addressing the concerns raised. I have no proposals, therefore, to amend the existing legislation.

Water and Sewerage Schemes.

503. **Deputy Michael D'Arcy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government when the extension to the waste water treatment plant in Gorey, County Wexford will be finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28234/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The Gorey Sewerage Scheme is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2007 — 2009 as a scheme to begin construction next year, at an estimated cost of €14m. My Department is awaiting the submission of contract documents for the scheme by Wexford County Council.

504. **Deputy Michael D'Arcy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government when the extension to the waste water treatment plant in Coolgreany, County Wexford will be agreed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28235/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The Coolgreany Sewerage scheme has been approved for funding under my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2007 — 2009 as part of the Serviced Land Initiative. My Department has approved Wexford County Council's contract documents for the scheme and it is now a matter for the Council to arrange for the works to be carried out.

505. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the grounds and the means by which he would consider granting permission to Dublin City Council to extract water from Shannon/Lough Ree to serve the greater Dublin area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28275/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The Dublin Water (Long Term Sources) Development Study was undertaken by Dublin City Council as a forward planning measure to identify future water supply requirements for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and potential solutions to those requirements. The Study, which was funded under my Department's Water Services Investment Programme, estimates that the GDA will require an extra 300 million litres of water per day by 2031 and identifies the Shannon as one possible source in that context.

Dublin City Council initiated a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in relation the Study findings in 2006. The City Council is currently considering the submissions received as part of the SEA process. However, any statutory approval in relation to this proposal would be a matter for planning authority and/or An Bord Pleanála determination. Under Section 30 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, I am specifically precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any particular case with which a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála is or may be concerned. Accordingly, I have no function in relation to the statutory approval process relating to a proposal such as this.

Local Authority Housing.

506. **Deputy Michael D'Arcy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if his Department will discontinue the practice of equipping new social housing units

for heating except for the oil burner and the oil tank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28392/07]

518. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to local authorities using alternative energy systems in local authority houses; if there are plans to do so; if he will bring in guidelines and instructions on the matter for local authorities in line with overall policy of 40% alternative energy for private houses before 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26144/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): I propose to take Question Nos.506 and 518 together.

The design standards for social housing, including the provision of appropriate heating systems, are set out in my Department's recently published guidelines, Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities. My Department has been supportive of a number of initiatives taken by housing authorities in relation to the use of alternative energy systems. With regard to the recently published draft building regulations under Part L of the building code, in particular, my Department, on 5 October 2007, issued instructions to housing authorities that all new proposals for social housing developments submitted for approval from 1 December 2007 should have regard to the proposed changes to the building regulations.

Water and Sewerage Schemes.

507. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the position regarding the upgrading of a sewerage scheme at Glin, County Limerick. [28418/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The Glin Sewerage Scheme, which is being advanced as part of a grouped project that also includes Athea, Askeaton, Foynes and Shanagolden, is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2007 – 2009 as a scheme to start construction in 2009. My Department is awaiting submission of Limerick County Council's Preliminary Report for the scheme.

508. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the position in relation to the provision of an upgraded sewerage scheme for Bruff, County Limerick. [28419/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The

[Deputy John Gormley.]

Bruff Sewerage Scheme, which is being advanced as part of a grouped project that also includes Drumcollogher, Hospital and Pallasgreen, is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2007 – 2009 as a scheme to start construction in 2009. My Department is awaiting submission of Limerick County Council's Preliminary Report for the scheme.

Fire Service.

509. **Deputy Joe Behan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the local authority areas here currently served by a full-time fire service; the local authority areas currently served by daytime manning; the funding allocated by his Department to these local authorities to assist in the financing of their fire services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28420/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Tony Killeen): A full-time fire service operates in Cork City, Dublin City, Limerick City and Waterford City. Dublin City Council, in addition, provides a full time service on behalf of the other three Dublin authorities: — Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, Fingal (excluding Skerries and Balbriggan which are covered by a retained fire service) and South Dublin County Councils. Galway County Council provides a full-time service for Galway City. Drogheda Borough Council and Dundalk Town Council each provide a full time service between the hours of 09.00 and 23.00.

Since 2001, the Department has provided €5.2 billion in general purpose grants from the Local Government Fund to assist the local authorities in carrying out their statutory functions, including the provision of fire services. In the same period, over €135 million has been provided to local fire authorities under the fire services capital programme for the provision of new and refurbished fire stations and the purchase of fire appliances and other equipment.

Environmental Policy.

510. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the action being taken to curb the growth of gunnera tinctoria in parts of County Mayo (details supplied). [28433/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Gunnera tinctoria is a large herbaceous plant that forms dense colonies that shade out and suppress native vegetation. This species is a vigorous seeder and also has the ability to spread vegetatively. Intense effort is required to control this

species. In 2006, a two year M.Sc. project was initiated to investigate measures for the control of Gunnera on Achill Island. The project is funded by Mayo County Council, and by my Department through the Biodiversity Fund which is administered by the Heritage Council.

Under Section 52(6)(a) of the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended), my Department has the power to make regulations prohibiting the possession or introduction of any species of wild flora which may be detrimental to native species. It is my intention to make regulations under this section in the first quarter of 2008, and to provide for a short lead-in time, after which possession or introduction of Gunnera will be prohibited. Whilst I recognise that the plant is already in the wild, my purpose is to prevent its further dispersal through garden centres for use around ponds and wet areas, from which it may escape or be released into the wild.

Genetically Modified Organisms.

511. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will make a statement on the EU Commission's attitude towards the ban on genetically modified corn in Austria. [28440/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): The European Commission has, on three occasions, attempted to overturn the Austrian national ban on certain genetically modified maize. The Commission's most recent proposal was considered at the Environment Council on 30 October 2007. On this occasion the Commission sought only to overturn the prohibition on the import and processing of the maize kernels for use in food and feed; cultivation was excluded from the Commission's proposal.

The change in the proposal was prompted by the Environment Council Decision on 18 December 2006, that 'different agricultural and regional ecological characteristics' should be taken into account. It was also prompted by the impending deadline of 21 November 2007 for compliance with World Trade Organisation (WTO) requirements. The Commission is satisfied that should the ban on food and feed be lifted, the US (and possibly other countries) would be much less likely to invoke action against the EU for breach of WTO rules.

Ireland supported Austria in each of the three votes on the Commission's proposals. While there was a qualified majority against the Commission on the first two occasions when it sought to overturn the Austrian ban, there was no qualified majority for or against the Commission proposal at the most recent vote at the European Environment Council. In these circumstances, it is

open to the Commission to implement its proposal to overturn the Austrian ban in regard to food and feed. Austria indicated at the Council meeting on 30 October that it would finalise a further report on 20 November justifying its action in invoking the bans on certain maize lines. In my view, Austria should have been allowed to complete its report and present its findings for consideration before any further action was taken in relation to the national bans.

Local Authority Housing.

512. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the number of people on waiting lists for local authority housing for each local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28443/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The most recent assessment of need for social housing was undertaken by local authorities in March 2005. The results of this assessment indicated that there were 43,684 households on local authority housing waiting lists. More comprehensive data in relation to the 2005 assessment at an individual local authority level were published in the Annual Bulletin of Housing Statistics 2005, a copy of which is available in the Oireachtas library and on my Department’s website at www.environ.ie. The next statutory assessment of housing need is due to be undertaken by housing authorities in March 2008.

513. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the number of local authority housing units built for each year 2002 to date in 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28444/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The information sought is published in my Department’s Annual and Quarterly Housing Statistics Bulletins, copies of which are available in the Oireachtas library and on my Department’s website www.environ.ie.

Grant Payments.

514. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, further to Parliamentary Question No. 610 of 23 October 2007, when an application will be completed for a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28503/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I

refer to the reply to Question No. 610 of 23 October, 2007. My Department has completed all the necessary procedures in this matter and it is a matter for the Chief State Solicitor’s Office to issue payment in this case.

Proposed Legislation.

515. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will introduce regulations to implement the recommendations of the working group to review the management of dog breeding establishments; and if he will confirm that the kennels of non-commercial clubs registered with an association (details supplied) will be exempt from such regulations. [28511/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Work is underway in my Department in drafting regulations to implement the majority of the recommendations of the Working Group to Review the Management of Dog Breeding Establishments. The question of whether or not to provide exemptions for specific types of organisations, or breeding establishments, from the requirements of the proposed regulations will be considered in the context of this work.

Architectural Heritage.

516. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his views on the restoration of a building (details supplied) in County Donegal which has huge significance to the heritage of the town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28538/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 provides wide ranging powers and responsibilities to local authorities regarding the safeguarding of structures which they place on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) attached to their development plan. My Department administers a number of grant schemes through local authorities and the Heritage Council to assist with the conservation of buildings on the RPS. While the structure referred to in the Question was identified in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage survey carried out in 1997 as being of local importance, I understand that the building in question is not on the local authority’s RPS.

Proposed Legislation.

517. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his views on making statutory provision for the naming of estates by requiring local authorities to appoint naming committees; and if

[Deputy Ciarán Lynch.]

he will make a statement on the matter.
[25891/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I refer to the reply to Question No. 503 of 9 October 2007. I consider that the policies and procedures used within a planning authority to determine appropriate naming of estates are best left to the individual planning authority and I have no plans to amend the legislation in regard to this matter.

Question No. 518 answered with Question No. 506.

Fire Service.

519. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the number of call-outs made in 2006 by both retained and full-time fire services in response to domestic chimney fires; if his Department requires qualifications or standards of companies or individuals who provide chimney cleaning services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26713/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Tony Killeen): Provisional statistics supplied to the Department by fire authorities indicate that there were 5,595 call-outs to domestic chimney fires in 2006. A Community Fire Safety Programme is being advanced by the Department to enhance fire safety generally and to contribute to bringing about a safer society. A priority project under the Programme dealing with fire safety in the home is being implemented through educational and promotional campaigns. Chimney fire prevention is an important part of this project. The setting of employment or related standards is not a matter for this Department.

Services for People with Disabilities.

520. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the grants available to persons registered disabled, to provide burglar alarm systems for their houses, in order to improve security; and the person who is responsible for administering these grants. [28590/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Batt O'Keefe): There are no grants available from my Department for the provision of burglar alarm systems. However, the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs manages the Scheme of Community Support for Older People, under which funding can be provided for a range of measures aimed at improving the security of older people, including the once-off cost of installing socially-monitored alarms

and a range of other physical security measures. Under the terms of my Department's new Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, administered by the local authorities, grants are available for a range of works that are reasonably necessary for the purposes of rendering the house more suitable for the accommodation of a person with a disability. These works may potentially include the installation of electronic assistive technologies such as reactive emergency alarm and monitoring systems.

Fire Service.

521. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will provide emergency funding as a matter of urgency to Clare County Council for the acquisition of two additional water tankers to improve the capacity of the fire service to fight fires in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28635/07]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Tony Killeen): The provision of a fire service, including equipment, is a statutory function of the individual fire authorities and the Department has no direct role in this matter. The Department supports the local fire authorities through the setting of general policy, the provision of capital funding, the issue of guidance to fire authorities in relation to fire prevention and operational matters and other such initiatives.

Under the annual Fire Services Capital Programmes in the period since 1998 to 2006 Clare County Council has received approval for 6 new fire appliances at a cost of around €1.3m and a new emergency tender at a cost of €265,000. In August 2007, under the 2007 Fire Services Capital Programme, Clare County Council received approval to purchase one new Class B Fire Appliance at a cost of €288,000. While the Department has not received any proposal for additional water tankers from Clare County Council, I understand that the Council intends to submit a formal application for funding. Any such proposal will be considered under the Department's 2008 fire services capital programme.

Election Management System.

522. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if there are plans to put in place a boundary commission to review local authority electoral boundaries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28651/07]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Unlike for Dáil and European Parliament constituencies, there are no legal requirements in relation to the frequency of local electoral area reviews. The last review of local electoral areas was carried out in 1998; the next local elections

are due to take place in 2009. I am at present considering the issues around a review of local electoral areas and I expect to be in a position to make a statement on the matter shortly.

Alternative Energy Projects.

523. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the breakdown of the expenditure involved in the budget designated for the advancement and promotion of renewable energy for home heating; and if any of the moneys provided in the budget have been allocated for other projects. [28082/07]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): To date, funding of €57m has been allocated specifically for the Greener Homes Scheme which provides grants for householders for the purpose of installing renewable heating technologies such as wood biomass boilers and stoves, solar panels and heat pumps.

Tax Code.

524. **Deputy Michael D'Arcy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if there has been an increase in the Government fuel levy; and the amount this additional revenue is expected to generate. [28391/07]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I assume that the Deputy is referring to the recent increase in the National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA) levy. NORA is a statutory agency under the aegis of my Department and has responsibility for ensuring that Ireland meets its EU and International obligations to maintain reserves of national strategic oil stocks. The NORA levy is imposed on the consumption of oil products and is used to fund NORA's activities. NORA receives no Exchequer funding. The level of the NORA levy remained unchanged at 0.476 cent per litre from NORA's establishment in 1995 until 31 October 2007.

Earlier this year, I made Regulations under the National Oil Reserves Agency Act 2007, which provide that with effect from 1 November 2007, the rate of the levy rises to 1.00 cent per litre. Under the previous arrangements, the NORA levy generated income of €37 million in 2006. Based on the 2006 levy income the increased levy could be expected to generate an additional €40 million per annum. This will allow NORA to maintain and increase the level of strategic oil stocks held by NORA in line with EU and International obligations. It will also underpin the Government's objective as set out in the White Paper, to maximise Ireland's wholly-owned stocks of oil and the level of stocks held on this island.

Telecommunications Services.

525. **Deputy Michael Kennedy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position regarding the roll-out of broadband for north Dublin; the number of subscribers in the area; the target number to be achieved; the companies operating in the area; the progress his Department has made in the tender process for the national broadband scheme in north Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28064/07]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The provision of broadband services is, in the first instance, a matter for the private sector. Broadband service providers operate in a fully liberalised market, regulated by the independent Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg). ComReg are responsible for the compiling of statistics on broadband uptake. I understand that these statistics are collected on a national basis only. Further information on broadband service providers in north Dublin is available on my Department's broadband website, www.broadband.gov.ie.

The widespread provision of broadband services continues to be a priority for the Government. In that regard, the procurement process for a National Broadband Scheme (NBS) is under way. The NBS will provide broadband services to areas that are currently unserved and will ensure that all reasonable requests for broadband in unserved areas are met. The first phase of the procurement process, Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) is now complete and four candidates have pre-qualified. As my Department indicated on 2 September 2007, the four candidates are, in alphabetical order, BT Communications Ireland Ltd Consortium, Eircom Ltd, Hutchinson 3G Ireland Ltd and IFA/Motorola Consortium.

The next phase of the procurement process involves inviting candidates to participate in a competitive dialogue process. My Department is anticipating that the award of the NBS contract will be Quarter 2 of 2008, with roll-out of the services due to begin as soon as possible thereafter. This timeline is subject to negotiations with candidates during the competitive dialogue phase of the procurement process.

Ministerial Staff.

526. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisers, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed by his Department on 1 November 2002; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28147/07]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The names, titles, and annual salaries of each of the

[Deputy Eamon Ryan.]

political advisors, press officers, assistants or other political appointees who were employed in

the then Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources on 1 November 2002 are set out in the table.

Name	Title	Salary
Mr Ciarán Ó Cuinn	Special Adviser to Minister Ahern	Principal Officer (Standard) salary scale (modified PRSI) €63,566 (min) to €78,627 (2nd LSI)
Mr Richard Moore	Press Adviser to Minister Ahern	Principal Officer (Standard) salary scale (modified PRSI) €63,566 (min) to €78,627 (2nd LSI)
Ms Katherine Licken	Policy Aide to Minister Ahern	Assistant Principal (Standard) salary scale (modified PRSI) €48,166 (min) to €60,057 (2nd LSI) plus 10% allowance
Ms Christine Maguire	Personal Assistant to Minister Ahern	Higher Executive Officer (Standard) salary scale €34,733 (min) to €44,029 (2nd LSI)
Ms Myra Wall	Personal Secretary to Minister Ahern	Executive Officer (Higher) salary scale €23,011(min) to €37,606 (max)
Ms Stephanie Byrne	Personal Secretary to Minister of State Browne	Secretarial Assistant salary scale €17,469 (min) to €33,704 (2nd LSI)
Mr Bernard Crosbie	Civilian Driver to Minister Browne	€25,698 per annum
Mr Michael Joyce	Civilian Driver to Minister Browne	€25,698 per annum

527. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the names, titles and annual salaries of each of the political advisors, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28162/07]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The names, titles, and annual salaries of each of the political advisors, press officers, assistants or other staff appointed by me are as follows:

Name	Title	Salary
Mr Morgan Bazilian	Special Adviser	Principal Officer (Higher) salary scale (modified PRSI) €88,261(min) to €102,305 (max)
Ms Bríd McGrath	Press Adviser	Principal Officer (Standard) salary scale (modified PRSI) €82,016 (min) to €95,363 (max)
Ms Suzanne Duke	Political Adviser/Coordinator with Minister of State Mr Tony Killeen, T.D.	Principal Officer (Standard) salary scale (modified PRSI) €82,016 (min) to €95,363 (max)
Ms Claire Byrne	Personal Assistant	HEO salary scale (modified PRSI) €44,314 (min) to €52,379 (max)
Ms Grace Milton	Personal Secretary	Secretarial Assistant salary scale €22,064 (min) to €41,019 (max)

Telecommunications Services.

528. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the plans to provide broadband access to residents in the Hackballscross and Kilkierley areas of County Louth. [28573/07]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The provision of broadband services is, in the first instance, a matter for the private sector. Broadband service providers operate in a fully liberalised market, regulated by the independent Commission for Communications Regulation. Broadband access is currently available in the areas mentioned from numerous service pro-

viders. Further details are available on the Department's broadband website www.broadband.gov.ie.

Official Engagements.

529. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on his itinerary of 5 October 2007; the groups he met; and the functions carried out. [28574/07]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I visited the Sustainable Energy Ireland offices and staff in Dundalk. I also had a number of meetings on local issues where the matters of a gas-fired

power generation station, proposed wind power stations and cockle-fishing in Dundalk bay were raised. In addition I attended the launch of a 20-20 Homes scheme. I found the meetings both informative and useful.

Departmental Expenditure.

530. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the reason for his decision to withdraw €10 million from the group broadband scheme and award it to Sustainable Energy Ireland; the lobbying received for such a move; and the details of all correspondence between himself and SEI on this matter. [28575/07]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The Greener Homes Scheme has been very successful since its launch in March 2006, with 16,000 grants approved since its inception. The aim of this scheme was to stimulate demand for renewable heat technologies in homes. Phase I of the Greener Homes Scheme delivered within budget in 18 months what was originally envisaged as a five-year programme and all of the €47m budget is now committed. Since Phase I was launched, the number of registered renewable energy installers has increased dramatically and there has been a ten-fold increase in products available on the Irish market. This clearly demonstrates the very

significant level of market development since the scheme was first launched.

The consistently high demand for the scheme showed that there was a clear opportunity to further develop the sector and make an even greater contribution to reducing fossil fuel dependence. Consequently I released €10m from the Information and Communications Technology Programme. While significant progress had been made on the procurement process for this scheme, no substantial expenditure was likely to be incurred until some time after a service provider has been appointed. This is expected to happen during quarter 2 of 2008. While discussions were held with SEI, no lobbying was received from any parties for this inter-vote virement. Certain payments from these programmes were put back into 2008 to allow SEI meet their more immediate demands.

Ministerial Appointments.

531. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the names of all members of the board of SEI; when they were appointed; and the criteria he used for selecting appointees. [28576/07]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The current members of the Board of Sustainable Energy Ireland are set out below.

Name	Date of First Appointment	Date of Appointment to current term
Mr. Brendan Halligan Chairman		01 October 2007
Mr. David Taylor Chief Executive Ex-officio member	01 May 2002	01 May 2007
Ms. Eileen Gleeson		08 September 2005
Mr. David Naughton	01 May 2002	08 September 2005
Mr. John Buckley	01 May 2002	08 September 2005
Mr. Martin Finucane	24 October 2003	
Mr. Pat O'Malley	01 May 2002	19 September 2006
Mr. Joe Harford		19 September 2006
Ms. Joan O'Connor		19 September 2006

There are three vacancies. Appointments to the Board are made in accordance with the requirements of the Sustainable Energy Act 2002 (No 2 of 2002).

Telecommunications Services.

532. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the amount of funding that has been spent on broadband outside of the MANs areas for the past three years on a county basis including the budgeted and actual amount for each year. [28626/07]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): Under the Group Broadband Scheme (GBS), which was launched in 2004, a sum of €5.9 million was approved for 162 broadband projects nationwide. When the scheme concluded at the end of 2006, there were 127 broadband projects operational and the grantees drew down €3.1 million in grant aid. The Scheme is now closed. As projects often cover more than one county, my Department does not have a breakdown of GBS expenditure on a county basis. However, I am making arrangements to provide the Deputy with the list of all projects and expenditure.

Special Areas of Conservation.

533. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he has adjudicated on a prospecting licence application for a project at Cregganbaun, Louisburgh, County Mayo; if his attention has been drawn to the scenic importance of the region and the fact that the area is a designated special area of conservation; and the way this designation will impact on his deliberations. [28644/07]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The existence of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) would not, of itself, rule out the granting

of an application for a Prospecting Licence. Many existing Prospecting Licences include SAC and Special Protection Areas (SPA). The holder of a Prospecting Licence is required to complete a Form of Undertaking which includes specific arrangements for ensuring that the environmental integrity of SACs and SPAs is respected. The Licensee must also consult and get the approval of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and this Department, for any works on or in the proximity of such areas. I will adjudicate on the application for a Prospecting Licence for the area in question following the conclusion of the public consultation process within the next month, and receipt of a report and recommendation from the Exploration and Mining Division of the Department.