

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 8, inclusive, answered orally.

Corporal Punishment

9. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has any plans to introduce a ban on parents slapping their children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7338/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Section 246 of the Children Act 2001 provides very clear legal deterrents to the use of excessive physical discipline within the home setting or otherwise, as follows:

Section 246.—(1) *‘It shall be an offence for any person who has the custody, charge or care of a child wilfully to assault, ill-treat, neglect, abandon or expose the child, or cause or procure or allow the child to be assaulted, ill-treated, neglected, abandoned or exposed, in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to the child’s health or seriously to affect his or her well-being.’*

The Children Act of 2001 also specifically prohibits physical punishment of children in all other settings such as schools, crèches, detention, public care settings etc

In relation to corporal punishment within the home, a limited defence of *‘reasonable chastisement’* exists in common law, but successful prosecutions have also been taken by the State under section 246 where parents are deemed to have used excessive or unreasonable force in disciplining children.

There is a balance to be found between supporting parents in effective parenting, in particular, in use of non-violent forms of discipline, and the use of criminal law to impose criminal sanctions on parents who do not adhere to best practice in parenting. It is important to emphasise the considerable progress made in recent years in encouraging parents to use alternative non violent forms of discipline in the family setting.

Recent official independent research undertaken by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs indicates that the practice of corporal punishment in the home setting is now relatively rare in Ireland. This research indicates that the vast majority of Irish parents never use corporal or physical punishment as a means of disciplining children and opt instead for alternative means of discipline. I have asked my officials to forward a copy of this research to the Deputies office for his information.

EU Presidency Priorities

10. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the issues she is prioritising during Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7322/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My overall aim for the Ireland's Presidency of the Youth Council is to build on what has been achieved for and with young people under recent Presidencies, to ensure that the outcomes of the Irish Presidency result in a sustainable legacy for youth policy and services and most importantly that these make a positive impact on Europe's young people.

The Presidency Trio of Ireland, Lithuania and Greece have agreed on '*Social Inclusion*' as the overall theme for the Youth Council over 2013/2014. The importance of the theme is underscored in recent policy documents such as EU Youth Strategy - Investing and Empowering Youth 2010-2018; Europe 2020; and in the recent EU Youth Report.

Building on a broad understanding of social inclusion as accommodating all young people and the range of issues they face, my priorities for the Youth Council Presidency are:

to promote understanding of the contribution of quality youth work to young peoples development, wellbeing and social inclusion; and to explore the potential of youth policy (as expressed through youth work and youth activities) to address the Goals of Europe 2020, particularly youth employment. I will bring forward proposals for Council Conclusions on these two priorities for adoption by the Council of Youth Ministers in May.

These policy priorities are being advanced through the work of the Youth Working Party made up of officials of Member States. They will be also informed by the outcomes of the structured dialogue process between young people, youth representatives and policy makers following the EU Youth Conference to be held in Dublin 11th to 13th March, 2013.

The EU Youth Conference is the flagship event in the Irish Presidency Youth programme. The conference is the culmination of the EU wide consultation with young people on the theme of social inclusion. It is estimated that over 12,000 young people will participate in national dialogues, at present underway, in member states. Following the national dialogues some 150 youth representatives will then participate in the EU Conference in Dublin next month, along with some 100 policy makers from member states and representatives of the EU Commission.

Following the EU Youth Conference, Ireland will host an informal meeting of Directors' General of Youth from each member state. Officials of the European Commission will attend and contribute to this informal youth policy debate and exchange of good practices relating to Ireland's priorities.

On 20th and 21st of June, I will host an expert round table event in Dublin that will explore further the role of youth policy in advancing employment for young people. The intention is to bring a new focus to the ways in which youth policy and the youth sector can bring new synergies and additional elements to achieve the goals of Europe 2020, in particular, in relation to youth employment.

Bullying of Children

11. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the role her Department will play in the recently launched Action Plan on Bullying; and if she will make

a statement on the matter. [7335/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The scale of bullying in Ireland remains a matter of grave concern. This is borne out by recent research findings:

- My Department's 'Growing Up in Ireland' study has found how over 24% of 9 to 17 year olds have reported been bullied.

- The Anti-Bullying Centre in Trinity College has found how one in four girls and one in six boys in Ireland have been involved in cyber-bullying either as a victim, bully or both.

- Research commissioned by the GLEN (Gay & Lesbian Equality Network) & BeLonG To on the experiences of young LGBT people in Irish schools has found that 58% reported the existence of homophobic bullying in their schools.

Bullying can have a terrible and corrosive impact on our children and young people, on their confidence, learning outcomes, self-esteem and mental health. The affects of bullying can last for years. Sadly, in some case they can result in the loss of young lives. In recent times we have learned of a number of very tragic cases where bullying was involved. On behalf of the Government and on my own behalf I wish extend my sympathies to the families and friends of the young people who have died.

As Minister for Children & Youth Affairs I am committed to working with colleagues in Government to ensure that integrated policy responses to combat bullying are high on our agenda. The new Children First guidelines which I published last year now, for the first time, recognises the problem of bullying.

Last month Minister Quinn and I launched the Action Plan on Bullying. This is the first plan of its kind and aims to address the serious impact of bullying on our children and young people. The publication of this plan is an important step in the Government's absolute commitment to working with a broad base of interests to protect children and ensuring a safer childhood.

The Action Plan recognises that as bullying is no longer limited to classrooms, we have to have a broader approach also. That means making sure that wherever young people are, they're protected by safety guidelines. It means making sure that wherever young people are, they are supported by an anti-bullying ethos and an Anti Bullying Framework.

In line with the Action Plan, my Department will lead the development of Anti Bullying Framework to support young people, parents, schools, teachers and youth worker.

The Anti Bullying Framework will be development and prioritised within the context of the new whole-of-government Children and Young People's Policy Framework which my Department is leading on and which is due be published later this year.

My Department will work with the Department of Education and Skills in the development of an anti-bullying website, as recommended in the plan, to provide a single point of access to practical advice for parents, children and teachers to support them in tackling and reporting bullying behaviours, including cyberbullying.

In recognising the lead role of schools in tackling bullying and their need for support and guidance, The National Education Welfare Board, which now comes under my Department's remit, has issued guidelines requiring each school must have policies to prevent or address bullying and schools must make clear in their code of behaviour that bullying is unacceptable. Compliance by schools with this NEWB requirement is now inspected by Department of Education Inspectorate during Whole School Evaluations.

In conclusion, my Department is committed to the fight against bullying and we will work with other Departments, childcare services, education welfare services and the youth sector to raise awareness about bullying, its impact on children and young people and the measures to be taken to tackle prejudice, combat bullying and promote a safer environment for our young people.

Youth Unemployment Measures

12. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the measures she is taking to support youth employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7334/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Government is committed to creating the environment for a strong economic recovery to support employment creation and jobs growth. Youth unemployment is a particular concern because of the difficulties it poses for young people themselves, their personal development and for social inclusion. The Government has a range of measures in place to tackle youth unemployment and these include initiatives in respect of education, training, job search assistance/work experience and support for job creation.

As Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, I have sought to highlight and promote the potential of youth work as part of the continuum of youth employment supports and I welcome the growing recognition in Ireland and across Europe of the potential of youth work services to enhance employability of young people.

Each year over 380,000 young people participate in youth work services throughout Ireland. Youth Work and non-formal learning, in its many programmes and activities can offer young people opportunities, including valuable volunteering opportunities, which can aide young people in acquiring new competences and skills and in turn enhance employability and job-readiness.

This is particularly relevant in the case of young people who are otherwise marginalised from traditional services, such as those who are not in education, employment or training, the so called NEETs cohort. Existing youth work services already provide a significant level of engagement with this cohort and have the potential to provide a value-added not readily available from other activation programmes, through provision of outreach, intervention and bridging programmes focused on developing skill-sets and job-readiness.

Already a number of Irish youth services have begun piloting innovative community-based programmes focussed on supporting youth employment. My Department and I will continue to engage with the newly-established National Youth Work Advisory Committee and other Government Departments to explore how such initiative can be supported as part of the Government's overall activation programme. Minister Bruton is currently finalising the 2013 Action Plan for Jobs on behalf of the Government and in that context my Department is working closely with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on the inclusion in the plan of appropriate actions relating to the contribution of the youth sector in supporting youth employment, including through a greater focus on promoting and supporting volunteering opportunities.

In line with the Ireland's overall EU Presidency priority theme of 'Jobs, Stability & Growth', I have sought to prioritise youth employment during my Presidency of the EU Council of Youth Ministers.

The Europe 2020 growth agenda emphasises the need to "*develop youth work as a resource*

to support youth employability” while the current EU Strategy for Youth (2009) contains a key objective to “develop youth work as a resource to support youth employability”.

With this in mind, Ireland’s Youth Presidency Programme includes a priority focus on maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy, in particular with respect to supporting youth employability. Work is underway on draft council conclusions which I hope will be agreed at the EU Council of Youth Ministers meeting in Brussels in May which I will chair. I also plan, as part of the Presidency programme, to host an expert round table event on quality youth work and its contribution to Europe 2020 and youth employment in June of this year.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

13. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of social workers for children now in place; her target for the end of 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7350/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Figures supplied by the HSE, from its census of employment in the public health and social care sector, indicate that the number of whole-time equivalent (WTE) social workers employed in the Children and Families service area was 1438 at the end of December 2012, which is the latest date for which related figures are available. The census numbers reflect the outcome of a process of reclassification of social workers within the HSE into various care groups, including children and families as part of the process of establishing the Child and Family Support Agency.

HSE Children and Family Services will continue to apply discretion to the filling of social work vacancies in 2013, taking account of identified need and subject to services being delivered within available resources.

Adoption Records Provision

14. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 90 of 15 May 2012 if she will report on the progress of the Health Service Executive’s search for birth related and other documents in the possession of the HSE and previous organisations now within the HSE organisation relating to persons identifying as Adopted and for whom no adoption record exists. [7274/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Adoption Authority of Ireland that, in mid 2010, they conducted a review of information it retained of contact received from persons seeking to trace their natural parents where no adoption records existed. This exercise indicated that 99 people who had identified themselves to the Board as adopted, did not have a corresponding adoption file. Around 45 of these cases related to people born after 1953 and the balance related to persons born pre-1953. Subsequently a further 20 applications from persons seeking access to the National Contact Preference Register (NCP) administered by the AAI have fallen into this category. In many cases they are aware that the details contained in the Register of Births are false and that their birth was registered incorrectly.

The HSE has also had contact from a small number of people in similar circumstances where no adoption record exists. The HSE have referred those people to the AAI to encompass them in the review, add their details to the NCP and provide assistance with information and

tracing.

The AAI and HSE have attempted to identify and quantify the numbers of people whose registrations fall into these categories but further efforts are required to move beyond that and endeavour to trace birth parents, children and or siblings who are affected by this issue. Furthermore currently records related to such registrations, that may exist, are held by various agencies, some by the HSE and AAI, but also possibly by private adoption agencies, maternity hospitals, private individuals and other sources.

This is a very complex and difficult issue and I have recently met with a group of people who have found themselves in these circumstances. I have informed them of the actions I intend to take to address their current situation including asking the AAI and HSE to identify the legislative options for examining all records in existence or any other administrative assistance or including provisions in this regard in the forthcoming Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill.

When the former Adoption Board launched the National Adoption Contact Preference Register in 2005, provision was made for persons, who were party to the illegal registration of a child, to register an interest in the Register for possible future contact with another party sometime in the future. Fundamental to the success of the NCPR is that any persons with information in this regard contact the Information and Tracing Unit of the AAI.

Child Care Services Provision

15. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she intends to develop a Scandinavian model of childcare in this country; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7324/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As part of Budget 2013 I, together with my colleague, the Minister for Social Protection, was pleased to announce a new After-School Childcare initiative which will be targeted at low-income families and supporting parents availing of employment opportunities.

The initiative is expected to receive full year funding of €14 million to provide over 6,000 quality after-school places for children attending primary school in order to support parents to take up employment. Lack of access to affordable, quality childcare is a significant barrier to many low income and disadvantaged families seeking to avail of work opportunities.

This initiative will provide an important support measure to enable parents to avail of job opportunities. This is in line with the Government's overall strategy to support parents of low income families to take up employment and demonstrates how Departments are working together to deliver the Government's agenda on promoting employment and supporting children's development.

The After-School Childcare Scheme will further augment my Department's programme of childcare supports for low income families. These include the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) and the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) programmes, both of which provide subsidised childcare for low income parents, including qualifying parents who are on approved VEC and FÁS education and training courses. In 2013, my Department expects to spend over €70 million on the CCS and CETS programmes, supporting over 30,000 childcare places.

My Department also implements the universal free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, under which all children have equal access to free

pre-school education in the year before commencing primary school. Some 66,000 children are currently availing of the ECCE programme which is expected to cost in the region of €175 million this year.

Future developments in the area of early childhood care and education, will be considered by my Department in the context of its National Early Years Strategy. The Strategy is currently being developed within my Department and is expected to be completed later this year. It is my intention that it will cover a range of issues affecting children in their first years of life as well as identifying best practice in other jurisdictions. Such international practices can inform our thinking in the policy choices we face in further developing early education and care for children, while recognising that specific solutions must be tailored to our current needs and priorities in this country.

Early Child Care Education Issues

16. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans for a second free pre-school year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7331/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme was introduced in January 2010 and provides a free pre-school year to all eligible children in the year before commencing primary school. In line with the Programme for Government, my Department has made a significant commitment to maintaining this universal programme and some 66,000 children are availing of it at this time. The programme is expected to cost in the region of €175 million this year.

I am aware of the need to further develop the early childhood care and education sector. However, any development that involves further pre-school provision would require considerable additional funding. I am also very conscious that work is continuing on improvement of quality within the pre-school year. All of the available evidence indicates that the quality of the provision is key to good outcomes for children. In particular, I would like to see further progress in workforce development within the sector given the demands which expansion would place on the current pool of trained staff.

Future developments relating to early years care and education are being considered in the context of the National Early Years Strategy for children aged from birth to six years, which is being developed by my Department and expected to be completed later this year.

Child Protection Issues

17. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide an update in her plans to place Children First on a statutory footing. [7309/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, which I published in 2011, provides clarity and guidance for individuals and organisations in identifying and responding appropriately to child abuse and neglect. It also sets out what organisations that care for or work with children should do to ensure they are safe whilst in the care of the organisation. The Government has committed, as a priority, to the introduction of legislation to underpin Children First.

The Deputy will be aware that I published the Heads of the Children First Bill in April 2012. The purpose of publishing the Heads was to allow for a full consultation at an early stage in the developing the Bill. I asked the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children to consider the Heads of the Children First Bill and make recommendations. I received their comprehensive Report in July 2012 and my Department has examined the broad range of submissions to, and recommendations of the Joint Committee. Among the many issues examined by the Committee were:

- The inclusion of emotional abuse
- Inclusion of childminders as a named individual
- Problems associated with appointment of a volunteer as a designated person including that it could deter people from volunteering
- Concern about complexity and additional responsibilities placed on the Designated Officer
- Issues surrounding identification of an ‘organisational unit’ where the organisation is part of, or affiliated to, or federated to, a national organisation
- concern that legislation focused on reporting where this was not found to be the main problem in reviews of child abuse and child death cases
- Capacity of HSE to implement legislation
- Inclusion of reporting of retrospective abuse

Submissions were not all in agreement and many points emerging need to be considered and reconciled. This involves consideration of both policy and operational issues as well as the best legal approach to achieving Children First objectives. It is my intention to ensure consideration of these complex issues is completed and revised proposals are submitted to Government as soon as possible with a view to the drafting of the Children First Bill as a priority.

Aftercare Services

18. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has fully considered the report of the National Director for Children and Family Services on the aftercare provision; if she will provide the opposition spokespersons with a copy of the report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7314/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will be aware that I am currently examining options, in association with the Attorney General, to strengthen legislation regarding the provision of aftercare. This matter is currently being progressed in my Department.

The Deputy will also be aware that the HSE has provided information on aftercare to my Department, to guide the development of policy to underpin the strengthening of legislation for services in this important area. The HSE responded to my Department at the end of November in relation to the key findings of the National Implementation Group and provided information on the current provision of aftercare, assessment of need, multi-agency working and the HSE policy regarding Section 5 of the Child Care Act 1991, which provides that the HSE must take all reasonable steps to make suitable accommodation available to a child who is in need of accommodation. The response of the HSE provides an important update on the significant prog-

ress in developing aftercare supports, the development of greater consistency nationally and the challenges in making supports available to individual young people, including the need for multi-agency cooperation and the need to take account of the views of those leaving care who, ultimately as young adults must wish to avail of the aftercare arrangements being made available. I have arranged for my officials to forward a copy of this response to the Deputy today.

The annual spend on aftercare in 2012 was €17 million. There are currently 42.2 whole time equivalent aftercare workers in the HSE. In addition, the HSE commissions aftercare services from Focus Ireland, Don Bosco and Cross Care. The most recent information available indicates that there are 1,387 young people in aftercare, the majority of whom are aged 18-19 years. Since November, I have received additional information regarding young people who were in foster care and I was advised by the HSE that approximately 640 young people aged 18 and over are living with their foster carers and are being supported financially by the HSE. A further 110 of the young people in aftercare are living in supported lodgings. Supported Lodgings are provided to young people in care and in need of accommodation and support aged between 16 and 18 years, who cannot live at home but are not yet ready to live independently. Supported Lodgings is a term used to describe when a young person lives with an adult or family in a domestic home and is provided with accommodation, care and support appropriate to their age and needs. Persons providing this service are fully assessed and monitored.

The HSE National Aftercare Service which is underpinned by a National Policy and Procedures Document, commits to promoting and achieving the best outcomes for young people leaving care and in ensuring consistency of support to these young people. An intra-agency National Aftercare Implementation Group, comprised of NGO groups representing aftercare, child advocacy, foster care and other groups, was established by the HSE to monitor progress in implementing the national policy.

The HSE has reported on the key findings of the National Implementation Group's review of aftercare provision. The review has shown that there is now a more systematic approach to ensuring that young people around age sixteen are identified through the care planning review process for assessment and through care planning. A standardised aftercare planning template is now being utilised nationally and this approach is helping to identify young people with special needs, such as learning disabilities, earlier and has led to good examples of interagency working. There have also been improvements in the statistical information available with additional new data being provided. While an aftercare service is provided across all areas, variations in how this is delivered and the level of aftercare allowances have been highlighted by the Group.

The National Policy and Procedures Document sets out the eligibility criteria for an aftercare service. The care planning review process identifies young people as they approach 16 years and a process of assessment commences at that point, in conjunction with the wishes and views of the young person. Each individual's strengths and need for support is assessed across a number of areas, including whether they will continue to live with foster carers for a number of years after reaching age 18. The assessment also looks at life skills and capacity to live independently in the short and longer term; relationships with family, carers and significant others; emotional and behavioural development; health and overall wellbeing; identity and very importantly, educational/training requirements.

Given the particular difficulties some young people experience in areas of mental health and disability, the aftercare policy has a strong multi-agency dimension, which is particularly important in the context of the HSE Children and Family Services' transition to the Child and Family Support Agency. Protocols are being developed with Social Inclusion, Disability Services, Mental Health Services and Primary Care to support this approach. A protocol has been signed with the Irish Youth Justice Service which covers joint working arrangements for young

people in Detention Schools. In addition, a protocol with the Housing Authorities which will set out a clear framework for identifying quality aftercare accommodation and commit local authorities to consider the needs of young care leavers is in the final stages of preparation.

Clearly, there have been improvements in the delivery of aftercare service and the issue is under ongoing active consideration by the National Implementation Group. My officials will continue to engage with the HSE to ensure that the service is addressing the needs of these vulnerable young people.

Child Support

19. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she supports subsidised childcare over benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7348/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The balance between providing support to parents through child benefit and other income supports, or through subsidised childcare services, is a matter for the Government to decide in the context of budgetary discussions.

My Department currently provides support to low-income parents to assist them with the cost of childcare through the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) and Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) programmes. The CCS programme is available to qualifying parents in some 950 community childcare services and costs in the region of €40 million per annum. The CETS programme is available to qualifying FAS trainees and VEC students in some 1,600 community and commercial services across the country. In addition, my Department implements the universal free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, at a cost of €175 million per annum.

A new School Age Childcare initiative was announced in Budget 2013 as part of a packet of measures to support children and families. It will be implemented as a joint venture by my Department and the Department of Social Protection. Under the initiative, over 6,000 after school childcare places will be made available for children of parents availing of employment opportunities. My Department has been given a full year allocation of €14 million to provide for the scheme which is expected to be piloted in the coming months and fully rolled out in September 2013.

I believe there is significant international evidence of the benefits for children's outcomes of the provision of quality education and childcare in the earliest years. Childcare services also make an important economic contribution through direct employment of staff in service delivery and through support for labour participation on the part of working parents.

Underage Drinking

20. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the role her Department is playing is discouraging underage drinking; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7346/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The prime responsibility for policy in the prevention and treatment of harm from the abuse of Alcohol lies with the Department of Health, which published the Steering Group Report on a National Sub-

stance Misuse Strategy in February, 2012 to provide an integrated response to the misuse of alcohol and other substances.

The report contains a range of recommendations to, among other things, reduce the consumption of alcohol in general. The recommendations are grouped under five pillars of Supply Reduction (availability), Prevention, Treatment, Rehabilitation and Research. The Report contains a range of recommendations which impact directly and indirectly on the problem of excessive youth alcohol consumption. My Department is represented on the National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol which involves a number of Government Departments and key stake-holders who are working to develop integrated approaches to tackle this important issue.

My Department is responsible for a number of youth programmes which support the development of children and young people, including the development of alcohol and drug policies in youth settings. These programmes include the Youth Service Grant Scheme and the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund in particular but also include programmes which support a range of youth work organisations. This work will continue to be developed throughout all youth organisations under the National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work which was launched in July 2010 and through the new Youth Policy Strategy which is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

In addition, my Department and the Health Promotion Unit of the Health Service Executive (HSE) are working in partnership with the National Youth Council of Ireland in implementing the National Youth Health Programme. The objective of the partnership is to provide a broad based, flexible health promotion/education support and training service, including making healthy choices in relation to alcohol, to youth organisations and those working with young people in non-formal education settings.

Bullying of Children

21. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to tackle bullying; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7320/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As Minister for Children & Youth Affairs I am concerned about the impact bullying can have on our children and young people, on their confidence, learning outcomes, self-esteem and mental health. The effects of bullying can last for years, and tragically bullying has contributed to the loss of young lives. My Department's report on the State of the Nation's Children: Ireland 2012 found that on average, 27.3% of children reported being bullied at school at least once in the past couple of months. I am committed to working with colleagues in Government to ensure that integrated policy and service responses to combat bullying and reverse these trends are high on our agenda.

On January 28 of this year along with my colleague Minister Quinn I launched the Action Plan on Bullying, a report produced by a working group which examined the issue of bullying in schools. As the first plan of its kind, the Action Plan on Bullying aims to address the serious impact of bullying on our children and young people. The publication of this plan is an important step in the Government's absolute commitment to working with a broad base of interests to protect children and ensure a safer childhood. The working group has reviewed evidence based research on bullying, consulted with leading academics in the field of bullying and reviewed the current best practices in bullying prevention in other jurisdictions.

The Plan recommends a range of evidence based actions together with a timetable for their

implementation to help us deal more effectively with bullying. My Department will continue to work closely with the Department of Education and Skills, and the Implementation Group being established by that Department, to oversee the implementation of the plan. My Department will ensure that actions recommended by the Anti-Bullying Working Group are prioritised in the Children and Young People's Policy Framework to be published later this year. This will be a cross-Governmental strategy for children and young people and I expect that it will further assist in promoting a common approach to the challenge of combating bullying.

My Department will work with the Department of Education and Skills in the development of an anti-bullying website, as recommended in the plan, to provide a single point of access to practical advice for parents, children and teachers to support them in tackling and reporting bullying behaviours, including cyberbullying. In recognising the lead role of schools in tackling bullying and their need for support and guidance, I have asked my officials to engage with the Department of Education and Skills and the education partners to explore any clarifications to the Children First Guidelines that may be required to further assist schools.

My Department is committed to the fight against bullying and we will work with other Departments, childcare services, education welfare services and the youth sector to raise awareness about bullying, its impact on children and young people and the measures to be taken to tackle prejudice, combat bullying and promote a safer environment for our young people.

Child and Family Support Agency Establishment

22. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will outline the intended make up of the board of the Child and Family Support Agency; if she will confirm that a representative from the family resource centres will have full board membership; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7304/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Government has approved the Heads of the Child and Family Support Agency Bill and has also agreed to the priority drafting of this Bill. The necessary legislative and organisational preparations are being prioritised so that the Agency can be established as soon as possible. From its establishment the Child and Family Support Agency will have service responsibility for a range of services, including child welfare and protection services currently operated by the HSE; domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services. The functions of the Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board will transfer into the Child and Family Support Agency upon its establishment.

The Government's consideration of these matters was informed, by the content and recommendations of the Report of the Task Force on the Child and Family Support Agency which I published in July 2012. The Task Force considered that the Agency needs to be as broadly based as possible and should include a range of prevention, early intervention, family support and therapeutic care interventions.

It is my intention that the agency will have a role in supporting families and communities. It will have the benefit in this role of 106 Family Resource Centres which have been developed across the country with funding from the Family Support Agency. The new Agency will build on the excellent work undertaken by the Family Support Agency over the last decade, and a community based approach will form an integral part of the new Child and Family Support Agency.

The composition of the Board of the Child and Family Support Agency is currently under

consideration. The composition of the Board will reflect the broad ranging nature of the Agency's responsibilities. In line with best corporate governance, the criteria for Board membership will be focused on ensuring that Board members have the requisite mix of experience and competencies needed to steer such a large organisation providing a diverse range of personal services.

Departmental Strategies

23. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to develop strategies that improve self-esteem and promote positive body imaging among young adolescents. [7273/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Self esteem and body image are key concerns for young people. The “**Report of a Survey on Young People's Body Image**” which I launched in 2012, marked an important milestone in giving young people a voice on this very important issue for them. This survey was carried out directly on foot of a key recommendation from Dáil na nÓg 2010, a representative forum for young people which is overseen by my Department.

At the Dáil na nÓg 2010 assembly, the delegates considered the importance of body image to teenagers' mental health. Noting the lack of national data on teenagers' body image, they decided that this was an issue worth researching. The survey was completed by 2,156 young people and gives new insights into how teenagers perceive themselves in an area of critical importance to their mental health. The Survey found that body image is a burning issue for young people in Ireland with 77% of participants ranking body image as important to them. 57% of the young people surveyed expressed some level of satisfaction with their body image which means 43% were dissatisfied.

The promotion of self esteem and a positive body image in young people is a complex issue requiring inputs from a wide range of stake-holders including parents, schools, the media, commercial organisations and the Health Service Executive (HSE) through its Health Promotion Programmes. My Department supports the National Youth Health Programme which is a partnership between my Department, the National Youth Council of Ireland and the HSE. The programme aims to provide a broad-based, flexible health promotion / education support and training service to youth organisations and to all those working with young people in out-of-school settings.

This work is achieved through the development of programmes and interventions specifically for and with youth organisations throughout the country and the provision of training support for workers and volunteers who implement these programmes. The issue of self esteem and body image is addressed as part of a holistic approach to health. It is covered under the Mindout Mental Health Promotion training and resource pack delivered to youth organisations. The training is based on the resource Mindout which was developed by Health Promotion HSE West and NUI Galway. Mindout is a twelve session mental health programme which takes a positive approach to the promotion of emotional and mental health among young people, looking at the ways they cope, ranging from personal coping skills to informal networks of support to professional or voluntary support services. Mindout adopts a universal mental health promotion approach which has strong links with the “Support for all” element of the recent guidelines on Mental Health Promotion for Schools published by the HSE, Department of Education and Skills and the National Office for Suicide Prevention.

The National Youth Health Programme also offers a Specialist Certificate in Youth Health

Promotion. This programme is accredited by NUI Galway and adopts a whole organisational approach to health promotion. It focuses on a holistic model of an individual's health and youth work as a valuable setting for health promotion. Further actions naturally extend beyond the remit of my Department. My Department is currently leading the preparation of a new Children and Young People's Policy Framework which will represent a whole of Government approach to addressing issues affecting children and young people including their well-being.

Departmental Strategies

24. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the progress made by her Department in the preparation of a Children and Young Person Policy Framework; when she expects that the drafting work will conclude; when she intends publishing the framework; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7311/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department is developing a new strategy for children and young people. It will build on *Our Children - Their Lives*, Ireland's first children's strategy which was published in 2000 and it will cover the 5-year period from 2013 to 2017.

In keeping with my Department's responsibilities for children and young people, the new Children and Young People's Policy Framework is being developed in a holistic way which will comprehend the continuum of the life-course from infancy through to early and middle childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. It will be the overarching Framework under which policy and services for children and young people will be developed and implemented in the State.

The views of a wide range of interests including children themselves will shape the development of the Policy Framework and it will be informed by the following inputs:

- the results of a consultation in 2011, which focussed on children and young people, in which almost 67,000 people throughout the country participated, the analysis of which was published recently;

- a public consultation of the general public conducted during the Summer. Over 1,000 submissions were received as part of that consultation. An analyst contracted by my Department is in the process of analysing these submissions and this process is expected to be completed in April;

- the advice of the National Children's Advisory Council which represents a range of statutory and non-statutory organisations working with children and young people. The Council will continue to advise my Department on the Framework until a draft is submitted to Government; and

- the views of the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group which includes nominees of Government departments and State agencies which develop policies and deliver services for children and young people.

My Department is also in the course of meeting with other Government Departments to discuss aspects of the Framework which will impact particularly on their areas of policy responsibility. This process is expected to be completed by the end of next month and, on completion of the analysis of the public consultation, the Policy Framework is expected to be finalised and published in the middle of this year.

Bullying of Children

25. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will indicate from the perspective of her Department, the extent, if any, to which she can engage with other Departments, schools and youth organisations with a view to combating bullying by electronic or other means; if it might be possible to focus particularly on this issue in an effort to provide an early warning and-or support service to deal with the issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7316/13]

192. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she and her Department have engaged with various voluntary and-or statutory organisations with a view to identifying the extent and impact of bullying amongst young people; whether she intends to take any particular or specific initiatives in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7575/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 25 and 192 together.

As Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, I am concerned about the impact bullying can have on our children and young people, on their confidence, learning outcomes, self-esteem and mental health.

My Department's report on the State of the Nation's Children: Ireland 2012 found that on average, 27.3% of children reported being bullied at school at least once in the past couple of months. A recent EU study to examine the safety of children on the Internet found that 4% of children between the ages of 9 and 16 in Ireland experienced online bullying compared with an EU average of 6%. I am committed to working with colleagues in Government to ensure that integrated policy and service responses to combat bullying and reverse these trends are high on our agenda.

On January 28th of this year, I along with my colleague Minister Quinn launched the Action Plan on Bullying, a report produced by a working group which examined the issue of bullying in schools. The working group on which my Department participated was chaired by the Department of Education and Skills. The publication of this plan is an important step in the Government's absolute commitment to working with a broad base of interests to protect children and ensure a safer childhood.

The working group reviewed evidence based research on bullying, consulted with leading academics in the field of bullying and reviewed the current best practices in bullying prevention in other jurisdictions. The Working Group also consulted with a range of public bodies, community and voluntary bodies and other stakeholders involved in combating bullying. A full list of the 68 bodies and individuals that provided input is available in the Appendix to the Action Plan on Bullying available on the Department of Education and Skills website.

The Action Plan recommends a range of evidence based actions together with a timetable for their implementation to help us deal more effectively with bullying. My Department will continue to work closely with the Department of Education and Skills, and the Implementation Group being established by that Department, to oversee the implementation of the plan.

My Department will ensure that actions recommended by the Anti-Bullying Working Group are prioritised in the Children and Young People's Policy Framework to be published later this year. This will be a Governmental strategy for children and young people and I expect that it will further assist in promoting a common approach to the challenge of combating bullying.

The development of the Policy Framework involves consultation between by Department and key stakeholders including other Government Departments, youth sector interests and children and young people themselves, all of which will inform the priorities of the Framework, which is expected by the middle of this year.

My Department will work with the Department of Education and Skills in the development of an anti-bullying website, as recommended in the plan, to provide a single point of access to practical advice for parents, children and teachers to support them in tackling and reporting bullying behaviours, including cyberbullying.

The Plan provides advice for parents and young people with regard to the problem of cyberbullying. In particular, it acknowledges that it is essential that parents and young people themselves understand how to use modern technologies safely; they must understand the risks associated with the cyber world and protect themselves outside of school hours in their homes and communities. The Action Plan provides advice for parents on protecting their children from cyberbullying. I would encourage parents and young people to avail of the advice on www.webwise.ie, an online collection of internet safety resources.

I would further direct the Deputy to the Office for Internet Safety, an Executive office of the Department of Justice and Equality. The office has responsibility for the development and promotion of strategic actions to promote the highest levels of internet safety.

My Department is committed to the fight against bullying and we will work with other Departments, childcare services, education welfare services and the youth sector to raise awareness about bullying, its impact on children and young people and the measures to be taken to tackle prejudice, combat bullying and promote a safer environment for our young people.

Children in Care

26. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the capacity and numbers in residence in each of the three special care units and the two high support units; the numbers currently awaiting placement in each of these; her plans for additional capacity at any of the current five locations or any other or new location; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7313/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Special Care involves the detention of a child for his or her own welfare and protection in a Special Care Unit with on site educational and therapeutic supports. A Special Care Unit provides secure residential service to children and young people who are in need of specialised targeted intervention. Children are detained if their behaviour is deemed to pose a risk to themselves. The detention, by order of the High Court, of a child in a Special Care Unit is considered as a last resort, for as short a time as possible, and when other forms of residential or community care are considered to be unsuitable.

There are three designated special care units in the country where children are detained on order of the High Court. There is a unit in Ballydowd in Dublin, which has a capacity of ten beds and is fully occupied, another in Gleann Álainn in Cork, with a capacity of four beds and which currently has three children placed there, and Coovagh House in Limerick, which a capacity of three beds and is fully occupied.

Additionally, there are two National High Support Units in Ireland, Rath Na nÓg in Castleblaney and Crannóg Nua in Portrane, both of which have capacity for six young people. There are currently four young people placed in each of the two units.

There are currently no young people approved and awaiting a special care placement. There are seven young people under consideration by the National Special Care Admission and Discharge Committee. This Committee is due to meet today. There are currently two young people on transition into High Support. There are eight young people under consideration for High Support, including two new referrals which will be discussed by the National High Support Admission and Discharge Committee, which is due to meet today.

A full review of the capacity of the HSE Alternative Care Services is currently being undertaken by an Independent Consultant, under the lead of the Office of the National Director for Children Family Social Services. The initial focus of this review was to consider the capacity requirements for the National High Support and Special Care Service. I am advised by the HSE that a Capital Building Project with the HSE Architectural Services commenced work in late 2011. Stage 2 of the design programme led to planning applications being lodged at the end of 2012.

Proposed Legislation

27. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when she will bring forward the adoption tracing and information legislation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7340/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The drafting of the Heads of Bill in relation to the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill is at an advanced stage in my Department. While consideration of the policy issues in relation to all aspects of the proposed Bill is ongoing, it is intended that the proposed legislation will provide for a structured and regulated way of both safeguarding adoption records and providing access to adoption information.

Child Care Reports

28. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the date on which she will publish the final report on the Ryan report implementation plan in 2013; if she will list the outstanding recommendations yet to be implemented; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7303/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to inform the Deputy that it is my intention to publish the final report of the Ryan Implementation Plan during 2013.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Ryan Report Implementation Plan - Third Progress Report was laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas on 12 November 2012. This Report contained full details of the implementation status of each of the 99 actions specified.

In relation to the Deputy's queries regarding outstanding recommendations, the latest information is that contained in the Third Progress Report mentioned above. This indicates that of the ninety-nine actions detailed in the Plan, 37 actions had a timeframe of 'ongoing'. These are, by their nature, not once off actions and while they may be deemed complete for the purpose of the Report, they will necessarily continue to be implemented on an ongoing basis. The remaining 64 actions had a specific timescale. An indicative overview status of the actions in the Plan is as follows:

- Complete: 59
- Implementation ongoing: 13
- Not yet complete: 27

The 99 actions identified in the Ryan Implementation Plan are the responsibility of a number of Government Departments and Agencies. In order to effectively monitor implementation, I chair a High Level Monitoring Group with representation from relevant Departments, the HSE, HIQA, the Gardaí and the Children's Rights Alliance.

The Implementation Plan for the Ryan Report specified a four year reporting period. The final phase of implementation, in 2013, will therefore focus on bringing each of the recommendations to full implementation.

United Nations Conventions

29. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to ratify the third optional protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure, which would enable children and their families to make complaints to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7302/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and entered into force on 2 September 1990. The UNCRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty, enjoying almost universal ratification by nearly all Member States of the United Nations. Ireland ratified the UNCRC in 1992.

The third Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was opened for signature by member states in February 2012. I have previously stated that it was my intention to sign the protocol on behalf of Ireland as soon as possible. My Department is currently finalising the State's combined 3rd and 4th Reports to the UN Committee on the Reports of the Child. When the report is finalised and submitted to the UN Committee, I intend to sign the third Optional Protocol in due course on behalf of Ireland. Ratification would generally take place some time after that, once the State is satisfied that the necessary legislative and administrative procedures are in place to enable full compliance. This matter will be assessed by the legal unit of my Department in due course.

Ministerial Responsibilities

30. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she and her Department intends to encompass within her Departmental responsibilities, full responsibility for the broadest possible extent of developmental and support services for children of all ages with particular reference to their health and/or welfare, education and general well-being; if children with special needs and/or learning difficulties are likely to fall within this remit; her views regarding the extent of the finances available to her Department to enable the provision of a comprehensive range of support services to meet any requirements in the short and medium term; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7315/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department was set up to drive the delivery of key commitments in relation to children and young people.

The Department was established in June 2011 with a mandate to put in place a unified framework of policy, legislation and provision across Government in respect of children and young people.

The responsibilities of my Department encompass a wide range of policy and service activity, both direct and indirect, for children and young people in Ireland. It has a complex mandate, comprised of a number of separate, but interrelated strands including:

- the direct provision of a range of universal and targeted services;
- ensuring high-quality arrangements are in place for focused interventions dealing with child welfare and protection, family support, adoption, school attendance and reducing youth crime;
- the harmonisation of policy and provision across Government and with a wide range of stakeholders to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

As outlined in my Department's Statement of Strategy, in order to achieve its goals, my Department works in close partnership with other Government departments, statutory agencies and non-governmental organisations on a range of cross-cutting issues in relation to both policy and provision as they relate to children and young people. The scope of this collaboration includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Department of Education and Skills (e.g. early childhood education, numeracy/literacy and skills development);
- Department of Justice and Equality (e.g. crime prevention, community sanctions, detention, diversion and equality);
- Department of Health (e.g. disability; health promotion, including nutrition and drugs policy);
- Health Service Executive (e.g. child welfare and protection, care and social services);
- Department of Social Protection (e.g. social inclusion, income support and the activation agenda);
- Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (e.g. employment creation and youth entrepreneurship);
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (e.g. UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and Council of Europe measures);
- Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (e.g. initiatives involving sustainable development and communities).

While responsibility for support services for children with extra needs will remain with the Departments of Health and Education and Skills, as appropriate, my Department will continue to work closely with those Departments.

The 2013 estimate includes an allocation of €443m for my Department which represents an increase of €16m over the 2012 allocation and this clearly demonstrates the continuing commitment of this Government to the ongoing development of quality and effective services to support children and families.

Child Protection Issues

31. Deputy Jonathan O'Brien asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will

provide an update on the establishment of a national out of hours social work service. [7307/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As part of the ongoing 'change agenda' in Child and Family services I am committed to developing the capacity of our child protection services to appropriately and effectively address the needs of children who present in emergency situations outside of normal working hours. What is important is that children in crisis, no matter where they are, have access to 24 hour social work assistance, and this is what the HSE's National Director for Children and Family Services and I are working towards.

Two out-of-hours pilot projects, one in Donegal and the other in Cork, were commenced by the HSE in 2011. The Donegal project started mid-year and the Cork project started in the third quarter. Both projects were internally evaluated by the HSE, which then commissioned an independent external assessment, undertaken by Trinity College Dublin. The HSE has reviewed the recommendations of the Evaluation Report and is committed to further development and expansion of the service subject to resourcing and the terms of the Croke Park agreement. In this regard, a business case for a National Children and Families Services Emergency Out of Hours Social Work Service has been prepared and a copy submitted to my Department. I have been informed by the HSE that talks with the relevant staff representative association are also underway.

It should be noted that at present the Health Service Executive provides out-of-hours emergency services for children at risk in the greater Dublin area through the Crisis Intervention Service, and outside the greater Dublin area through the Emergency Place of Safety Service. The Crisis Intervention Service provides out-of-hours emergency social work assistance to young people aged under 18 years. The service operates across the greater Dublin area (Counties Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow). Referrals are made by service providers outside of normal working hours i.e. Gardai, hospital and ambulance service personnel. The Emergency Place of Safety Service, operates outside the greater Dublin area, whereby Gardai can access an emergency placement for children found to be at risk out-of-hours. This service involves the placement of a child in a family setting until the next working day, when the local social work service assumes responsibility for the case. As part of this service Gardai have access to advice and information from a non-HSE social work off-site resource which is provided on a contract basis.

Child Care Services Provision

32. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of places currently available on the after school scheme that was announced in budget 2013; the timeline for availability of the proposed 6,000 places; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7305/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As part of Budget 2013 I, together with my colleague, the Minister for Social Protection, was pleased to announce a new School Age Childcare initiative which will be targeted at low-income parents availing of employment opportunities.

The initiative is expected to receive full year funding of €14 million to provide over 6,000 after-school places for children attending primary school in order to support parents to take up employment. Lack of access to affordable, quality childcare is a significant barrier to many low income and disadvantaged families seeking to avail of work opportunities.

This initiative will provide an important support measure to enable parents to avail of job

opportunities. This is in line with the Government's overall strategy to support parents of low income families to take up employment and demonstrates how Departments are working together to deliver the Government's agenda on promoting employment and supporting children's development.

The School Age Childcare Scheme will further augment my Department's programme of childcare supports for low income families. These include the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) and the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) programmes, both of which provide subsidised childcare for low income parents, including qualifying parents who are on approved VEC and FÁS education and training courses. In 2013, my Department expects to spend over €70 million on the CCS and CETS programmes, supporting over 30,000 childcare places.

Officials in both my own Department and the Department of Social Protection are currently working to finalise the details of the scheme and its operational arrangements. As is the case with the CETS scheme, the new scheme is expected to be open to both community and commercial childcare providers across the State and it is anticipated that places will become available on an interim basis from early 2013 with the full roll-out of the programme commencing in September 2013. As soon as this work has been completed, further information will be made available.

Child and Family Support Agency Remit

33. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will outline proposals to transfer clinical psychologist posts from the Health Service Executive to the new Child and Family Support Agency; if she will detail the consultation and engagement with professional bodies and unions which have taken place in advance of this proposed move; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7310/13]

44. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the way the proposed move of responsibility for youth psychological services from the Health Service Executive to her Department will operate, specifically with regard to achieving a multi-agency approach to providing such services when agencies operate under the authority of other Departments; the way the new arrangement will work in relation to the HSE; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7259/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald)(Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 33 and 44 together.

Arising from the Government's consideration and decision with regard to the range of functions to be discharged by the new Child and Family Support Agency, it was agreed that an impact analysis be jointly developed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Health regarding the proposed future arrangements for the provision of the community psychology service as it relates to children and family services covered by the Child and Family Support Agency and to services provided by the HSE. This work is being undertaken as a priority.

I have met with representatives from the Heads of the Psychology Services Ireland and with a delegation from the IMPACT trade union to discuss issues relating to the future governance and organisational arrangements for the provision of community based psychology services. Our shared objective is to ensure that the optimal national governance and service delivery framework is in place to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and families and other

clients who need to avail of this key service. The views of the profession and its representatives will receive appropriate consideration as part of the impact analysis.

Ministerial Meetings

34. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide a report on her December meeting with a delegation from the Council for Marriage and Family of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7344/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald)(Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I met with a delegation from the Council for Marriage and Family of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, led by Bishop Christopher Jones, on 14th December last. I updated the delegation on progress relating to the establishment of the new Child and Family Support Agency and the range of services which it will encompass. From its establishment the Child and Family Support Agency will have service responsibility for a range of services including child welfare and protection services currently operated by the HSE, the functions of the Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board.

The delegation updated me on the ongoing work of the Bishops' Council for Marriage and Family and the range of social service provision with which the Church is engaged. This included services provided by Accord, the Catholic marriage care service, which is funded by my Department through the Family Support Agency. We agreed that support for parenting and families would continue to be a priority for the Council, my Department and the new Agency. The delegation expressed support for the strong focus on support for children and families which has followed the establishment of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. This will be further emphasised in the establishment of the Child and Family Support Agency. Finally, we also agreed to meet again to continue dialogue with regard to the provision of high quality and targeted services to support children and families.

Foster Care Policy

35. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of allegations against foster carers currently being investigated by the Health Information and Quality Authority; the number of foster carers these allegations have been made against that have not been Garda vetted; the number of allegations of this nature that have been investigated by HIQA each year since its establishment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7306/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald)(Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy should be aware that statutory remit of the Health Information and Quality Authority does not include investigating allegations made against foster carers. Under Section 69 of the Child Care Act 1991, HIQA inspects foster care services. The statutory responsibility to investigate any allegations, including those made against foster carers, lies with the Health Service Executive (HSE). If an allegation is made against a foster parent, the procedures as set out in Children First are followed. When carrying out foster care inspections, the Authority looks to see that such allegations have been properly addressed. I have asked the HSE for details of the number of allegations that are currently being investigated and I will forward this information to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Youth Services Provision

36. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when she intends to launch the review of the 2001 Youth Homelessness Strategy to be undertaken by the Centre for Effective Services; when she expects the CES to complete and submit its findings and recommendations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7312/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald)(Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has engaged the Centre for Effective Services (CES) to undertake a high level review of the implementation of the 2001 Youth Homelessness Strategy.

The purpose of the review is to establish the extent that the strategy has been successful, to identify blockages and challenges to its implementation in respect of any outstanding actions and to make recommendations for future action. Consultations were held with the relevant service providers, non-Government agencies and young people as part of this process. This review will inform the development of a framework to address ongoing problems identified for children out of home over the next five years.

The review is nearing completion and officials in my Department are working closely with colleagues in the CES to ensure that the report is finalised in the coming weeks. It is my intention to publish this report as soon as possible thereafter.

Child Care Services Provision

37. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will be supporting the parent child home programme operated by the Early Learning Initiative in the Dublin Docklands area; if her attention has been drawn to its efforts to achieve a five year funding goal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6997/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department currently provides support to parents to assist them with the cost of childcare. This support is provided through the provision of two targeted childcare support programmes - the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme, which provides funding to community-based childcare services to enable them to provide childcare at reduced rates to low income and/or parents on social welfare; and the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) programme, which provides payments towards the weekly cost of childcare places for trainees and students deemed qualified by FÁS and the VEC. My Department also provides the funding that supports the universal Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme which gives one free pre-school year to all children before they commence primary school.

As part of Budget 2013 I, together with my colleague, the Minister for Social Protection, was pleased to announce a new After-School Childcare initiative which will be targeted at low-income families and supporting parents availing of employment opportunities. The initiative is expected to receive full year funding of €14 million to provide over 6,000 quality after-school places for children attending primary school, as well as supporting parents to take up employment. Lack of access to affordable, quality childcare is a significant barrier to many low income and disadvantaged families when seeking to avail of work opportunities. There are currently in excess of 100,000 children being supported under the above programmes.

I recently launched three evaluation reports on the Early Learning Initiative and I am aware of the positive impact of this programme on children and families in the communities where this programme operates. However the priority for my Department is to ensure that the child-

care support programmes that I have outlined above and in which considerable investment has already been made, continue to be delivered from quality settings and are available to the many children throughout the country that need them.

I was in a position to approve funding of €31,500 for this initiative from my Department's National Lottery allocation last year.

Departmental Expenditure

38. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on the impact that Budget 2013 has had on children and youth affairs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7318/13]

188. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she considers Budget 2013 to have been coherent in its measures that impact on children and youth affairs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7480/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 38 and 118 together.

Budget 2013 provides for an allocation of €443 million for my Department. This level of funding represents an increase of €16m over 2012 allocation and consists of €417 million in current expenditure and €26 million in capital expenditure. In addition, Budget 2013 provides for €546 million in the Health Service Executive Vote (HSE) for 2013 in respect of Children and Family Services. This consists of €545 million in current expenditure and €1 million in capital.

The maintenance of the budgetary provision for child welfare and protection services at a time of wider curtailment in public expenditure reflects the priority attached by Government to this area. The potential provided by these resources will be further strengthened in 2013 through reform and the establishment of the new Child & Family Support Agency. This will involve moving the child welfare and protection services out of the HSE and creating a new statutory body which will also encompass both the National Educational Welfare Board and the Family Support Agency. Under the Government's reform programme, we are moving to a situation where child and family welfare is the sole focus of a single dedicated State agency, overseen by a single dedicated Government Department

The funding allocated to my Department is providing for the retention of schemes and services during 2013, including retention of the universal free Pre-School Year, as well as the introduction of a number of important new initiatives and developments. These include: a new School Age Childcare initiative with full year funding of €14 million, which will provide over 6,000 after-school places for children in primary school to support parents in low-income families to take up employment; a new 'Area Based Approach to Child Poverty' initiative with a funding allocation in 2013 of €2.5 million; and the provision of €20.4 million in capital funding to further develop the National Children Detention Facility at Oberstown and end the practice of detaining 17 year old boys in St Patrick's Institution.

The initiative relating to School Age Childcare is a joint initiative with my colleague the Minister for Social Protection. It is hoped to pilot the scheme in the coming months with a full roll-out from September 2013. The new scheme will augment my Department's existing programme of childcare supports for low income parents, which with this additional funding will now amount to over €88 million. This programme includes the existing Childcare Community Subvention (CCS) and Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) schemes. These are

in addition to the universal free pre-school year which has a separate budget of €175 million. Extending childcare provision has been a key priority for me and this initiative shows how Departments are working together to deliver on this Government's agenda to promote employment and to support children's development.

The new Area Based Approach to Child Poverty initiative will build on and continue the work of the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) which supported projects in Tallaght, Ballymun and Darndale. These projects involve a range of pilot programmes to improve outcomes in areas such as literacy, speech and language, parenting, health and pro-social behaviour. We know that early intervention improves life chances for children and families. This is even more true in communities with high levels of disadvantage and joblessness.

I particularly welcome the provision in Budget 2013 of €20.4 million in capital funding, to enable the National Children Detention Facility project in Oberstown to proceed. Since assuming responsibility for the children detention system in January 2012, I have worked with my colleagues in Government on a range of actions to end the practice of detaining children in St Patrick's Institution. The provision of new the facility in Oberstown, which is expected to be completed in 2015, will deliver all detention services for children in a single location which will maximise the scope for ensuring best practice standards and improving operational efficiency.

Children's Rights Referendum

39. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on the full McCrystal judgement handed down last week in the Supreme Court; the reason her Department used €1.1 million of Exchequer funding to support the "Yes" campaign; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6999/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The judgement in *McKenna* stated that the Government has a duty to give information to the electorate as well as to clarify issues which may arise in the course of the campaign, and must do so without advocating a particular position. Governments have in fact carried out this role in other Referendums since the *McKenna* Judgement, including in the Lisbon and Stability Treaty referendums. The Government has welcomed the fact that the Supreme Court in the *McCrystal* Judgement has provided, for the first time since 1995, some guidelines on the application of the important McKenna principles.

In relation to the Children's Referendum, the Government aimed, through its information materials, to encourage the maximum public debate on, and participation in, the referendum. In doing so, it was conscious of an acknowledged gap in information that can attend referendums. The Government considered that in preparing information materials, it was paying appropriate regard to the McKenna principles.

In its Judgement of 11th December, 2012, the Supreme Court found that the Government at all times acted in a *bona fide* manner. It noted that not everything in the advertisements, information booklet and website was objectionable under the McKenna principles. However, the Supreme Court found that the cumulative effect of matters identified in these materials contravened the McKenna principles. The failures identified by the Supreme Court are fully acknowledged and greatly regretted.

Hospital Services

40. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has had any consultation with the Department of Health or the Health Service Executive regarding the reduced budgets in 2013 for two Dublin children's hospitals; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7327/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I understand that the Deputy is referring to Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, and the Children's University Hospital, Temple Street.

The allocation of specific hospital budgets is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Health and the Health Service Executive to determine and I understand that the process of agreeing final allocations, within the resources available for the overall hospital sector, is still on-going. Allocations are subject to change as part of the normal budget-setting process and, in these circumstances, the Deputy will appreciate that it would be inappropriate for me to comment. However, I have been assured that no hospital will face an undeliverable target in 2013 and that the primary focus will be on delivering services within budget and managing service delivery risks effectively.

Early Years Strategy Publication

41. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when the Early Years Strategy will be published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7321/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department is currently developing a new Children and Young People's Policy Framework which will set out high-level goals for both my own and other Departments for the next five years. The Policy Framework is expected to be published in mid 2013 and will build on Our Children - Their Lives, Ireland's first Children's Strategy which was published in 2000. This is relevant to the National Early Years Strategy as the Strategy is one of three, more detailed strategies which will be developed under the Framework.

The Early Years Strategy, which will be Ireland's first ever national strategy for early years, is already under development and is expected to be completed and published later this year. It is expected that it will cover a range of issues affecting children in their first years of life such as health, including physical and mental development, vaccination programmes and population health issues such as nutrition and exercise, as well as parenting and family support, learning and development, play and recreation and early childhood care and education, including literacy and numeracy.

The Strategy will bring together and consider a significant amount of international and domestic research on the importance of early years for child development, including findings from the 'Growing up in Ireland' study. It will also be informed by the evaluations from the Prevention and Early Interventions Projects which have been funded jointly by my Department and philanthropic organisations, as well as an analysis of existing service provision and associated resources. The major programme of institutional change which is currently underway, including the establishment of the Child and Family Support Agency, will also be taken into account.

The results of a public consultation, undertaken as part of the development of the Children and Young People's Policy Framework, is currently being analysed and will inform both the Framework and the Early Years Strategy. A further, focussed consultation with key stakeholders in relation to the Early Years Strategy, is also proposed.

I have appointed an Expert Advisory Group, chaired by Dr. Eilis Hennessy, Head of School

of Psychology at UCD, to advise on the preparation of the Strategy. The Group comprises external experts from a range of specialties, including paediatrics, early childhood care and education, child protection and public health nursing and is continuing to meet on a regular basis. I have met the Expert Advisory Group on a number of occasions, most recently on 21 January 2013 and I am very satisfied with the progress made in developing Ireland's first Early Year's Strategy.

Proposed Legislation

42. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the legislation she plans to progress in 2013. [7308/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have an extensive legislative programme to address child protection issues which fall within my remit as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

I published the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2013 on 8th February and I will initiate it in Seanad Éireann later today. It will be brought before this House at the earliest possible date.

It is my intention to publish the Child and Family Support Agency Bill and the Children First Bill as soon as possible during 2013.

The General Scheme and Heads of Bill of the Adoption (Amendment) Bill were published in the context of the Children's Referendum. On the signing of the certificate of the 31st Amendment to the Constitution it is my intention to publish this Bill and to present it to the Oireachtas.

In relation to the Adoption (Tracing and Information) Bill the General Scheme and Heads of Bill have been drafted and a number of policy and legal issues are currently under consideration. It is my intention to publish this Bill during 2013.

It is also my intention to progress the Children (Amendment) Bill during 2013. Work is progressing on drafting a General Scheme and Heads of Bill to amend the Children Act 2001. The main purpose of the Bill is to amalgamate the children detention schools in the interests of achieving efficiencies. It is my intention to submit the draft General Scheme and Heads of Bill to Government for approval as soon as possible.

Child and Family Support Agency Establishment

43. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when she expects the new Child and Family Support Agency to be operational; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7332/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am firmly committed to the transformation of Ireland's child protection and welfare services, and to the establishment of a new Child and Family Support Agency. The Task Force on the establishment of the Child and Family Support Agency reported in July of 2012. The work of the Task Force informed the development of detailed legislative proposals to Government, covering a range of areas including the function and services to be overseen by the Agency, governance structures and implementation arrangements. Arising out of these proposals, the Government approved the Heads of the Child and Family Support Agency Bill and has also agreed to the priority drafting of this Bill. The Agency, upon establishment, will encompass services which are currently the responsibility of three separate agencies; namely the HSE, the Family Support Agency and

the National Educational Welfare Board. The necessary legislative and organisational preparations are being prioritised so that the Agency can be established as soon as possible. Drafting of the Child and Family Support Agency Bill is at an advanced stage, in line with the policy decisions of Government. I anticipate that the legislation will be presented to the Oireachtas during the current term. A precise target date for the establishment of the new Agency will be set when consideration of the legislation is advanced.

While the legislative process is under way, all necessary organisational preparations are continuing in parallel. These preparations are being overseen by a high level group chaired by the Secretary General of my Department and involving representatives of the Departments of Health and Public Expenditure and Reform, the HSE and the incoming management team of the new Agency.

When established, the Agency will constitute one of the largest public agencies in the State with staff of over 4,000 employees. It represents one of the largest and most ambitious areas of public sector reform currently underway. I am confident that the establishment of the Agency will bring a dedicated focus to child protection, family support and other key children's services for the first time in the history of the State and will in time contribute to the transformation of what are essential services for families and communities.

Question No. 44 answered with Question No. 33.

European Parliament Membership

45. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the discussions he has had with the President of the European Parliament in regard to the need to retain the present level of Irish membership of the European Parliament; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7590/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Article 14.2 of the Treaty on European Union sets an overall ceiling of 750 seats, plus the President, for the European Parliament. It also provides that representation of citizens shall be degressively proportional, with a minimum threshold of six members per Member State, and that no Member State shall be allocated more than ninety-six seats. There is a need therefore to adjust the distribution of seats in the Parliament before the 2014 elections to take account of the accession of Croatia in 2013.

Under Article 14.2, the composition of the European Parliament is decided by the European Council by unanimity on the initiative of the Parliament and with its consent. Therefore the right of initiative in relation to this issue rests with the European Parliament. The Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament (AFCO) had its first consideration of a draft report on 22 January 2013. AFCO will further consider the draft report over the coming weeks and a vote in the European Parliament is planned for the March plenary session. When Parliament has agreed on its proposal will the matter come to the European Council. The Parliament must also give its consent to the decision reached by the European Council.

Foreign Conflicts

46. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will give an update on torture against Iraqi citizens by the US; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7645/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I have seen no recent reports pertaining to this subject. Ireland of course deplores the use of torture in any context.

Budget Statement

47. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the timescale projected for the Budget later in 2013 in respect of 2014; if he will provide an assessment of the implications of bringing the date forward; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7627/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In 2011, EU countries launched the European Semester cycle as agreed at the European Council in June 2010. The aim of the Semester is that EU-level discussions on fiscal policy, macroeconomic imbalances, financial sector issues, and growth-enhancing structural reforms will now always take place before governments draw up their draft budgets and submit them to national parliamentary debate in the second half of the year. Additionally, the so-called “six-pack” of economic governance legislative measures came into effect in 2011 in order to enhance economic and budgetary coordination across the EU. The position on the date of budgets raised by the Deputy is as set out in section 6.4 of the Budgetary Reform Chapter of the Medium-Term Fiscal Statement published last November.

Another draft economic and budgetary regulation, part of the so-called “two-pack”, will introduce a common budgetary timeline for all euro area Member States.

When this regulation is adopted and in force, all euro area Member States will be required to publish their draft budget for central government and the main parameters of all other General Government sub-sectors no later than 15 October each year with the final budget adopted or fixed upon annually by 31 December. This means that much of our existing budgetary process, which is currently completed in the first week of December, will have to be finalised earlier in the year.

Government will be considering the implications of these reforms in the coming months and once this requirement is in force, I can assure the Deputy that all necessary action will be taken to ensure that Ireland complies with the new requirements.

Property Taxation Exemptions

48. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Finance if there are any exemptions to the property tax based on household income; if he will outline the mechanism and interest rate for the deferral of a liability to the tax; if the interest rate is variable or fixed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7660/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 provides exemptions for certain residential properties but none of these exemptions is related to the property owner’s income. A system of deferral arrangements, for owner-occupiers and tenants on leases that are longer than 20 years, is available where there is an inability to pay and certain specified conditions are met. This option is not available for landlords or second homes. A person who qualified for full deferral can opt to defer 100% of the LPT liability. A person who qualifies for partial deferral can opt to defer 50% of liability and must select a payment option to pay the balance of the liability. Interest will be charged on LPT amounts deferred at a rate of 4% per annum. The deferred amount, including interest, will attach to the property and will have to be paid before the property is sold or transferred.

The deferral conditions are as follows:

	Condition Number	Condition
Full Deferral	1	Gross income for the year is unlikely to exceed €15,000 (single) and €25,000 (couple)
Full Deferral	2	For owner-occupiers who have an outstanding mortgage, an adjusted gross income limit applies. The thresholds (€15,000 single, €25,000 couple) may be increased by 80% of the gross mortgage interest payments that a liable person expects to make by the end of the year for which gross income is being estimated. This type of deferral will be available until 31 December 2017.
Partial Deferral	3	The gross income limits specified at condition number 1 above are increased to €25,000 (single) and €35,000 (couple).
Partial Deferral	4	For owner-occupiers who have an outstanding mortgage, an adjusted gross income limit applies. The thresholds specified at condition number 3 above (€25,000 single, €35,000 couple) may be increased by 80% of the gross mortgage interest payments that a liable person expects to make by the end of the year for which the gross income is being estimated. This type of deferral will be available until 31 December 2017.

Tax Reliefs Availability

49. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Finance if a person (details supplied) in County Wexford can avail of tax relief for a disabled passenger; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7713/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that Section 134(3) of the Finance Act 1992 (as amended) and Statutory Instrument No. 353 of 1994 (Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations, 1994 (as amended) provide for permanent relief from the payment of specified maximum amounts of VAT and VRT for qualifying persons under the scheme. A repayment of excise duty on fuel used for the transport of a qualifying disabled person and motor tax exemption is allowable provided the vehicle has been purchased from an authorised person in the State (i.e. a person who is authorised under section 136 of the Finance Act 1992 (as amended) to manufacture, distribute, deal in, deliver, store, repair or modify unregistered vehicles and to convert registered vehicles) and the engine capacity does not exceed 4000cc. in the case of a disabled passenger.

The person (details supplied) should contact Revenue's Central Repayments Office at Tel:

1890 606061 with a view to clarifying these details to establish their eligibility in respect of the fuel repayments and motor tax exemption.

IBRC Liquidation

50. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement by the National Asset Management Agency on 7 February 2013 when it said in the period to mid-2013, the special liquidator will seek to value and sell the secured underlying assets subject to the floating charge, after the sales process conducted by the special liquidator has been completed later in the year, National Asset Management Agency will acquire the unsold loans in the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation loan portfolio in addition to the proceeds of any asset sales conducted by the special liquidator during the sales process, if he will confirm the NAMA valuation methodology of any loans acquired from IBRC and if such methodology will be further to the European Commission approval of the NAMA scheme in February 2010; and specifically if NAMA will be required to pay so-called long term economic value. [7717/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I would like to refer the Deputy to Section 14 of the IBRC Bill 2013 which sets out the methodology for the valuation of assets to be acquired by NAMA. The Special Liquidator acting on the instruction of the Minister shall appoint suitably qualified person(s) to carry out an independent valuation of the bank's assets using standard loan valuation methodologies.

IBRC Liquidation

51. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement by the National Asset Management Agency on 7 February 2013, if NAMA will bid for loan assets and associated collateral being disposed of by the special liquidator between now and mid-2013 when NAMA is to bid for any remaining loans. [7718/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In accordance with Section 13(a) & (b) of the IBRC Act 2013 the Minister may direct NAMA in writing to bid for or acquire IBRC assets. NAMA has been directed to establish a special purpose vehicle to acquire the floating charge over certain IBRC assets. After the sales process conducted by the Special Liquidator has been completed NAMA is expected to acquire the unsold loans in the IBRC loan portfolio in addition to the proceeds of any assets sales conducted by the Special Liquidator during the sales process.

IBRC Liquidation

52. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement by the National Asset Management Agency on 7 February 2013, if he will provide an assessment of the merit in directing NAMA to acquire all legacy loans at the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation today. [7719/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The recent enactment of the IBRC Act 2013 together with the replacement of the Promissory Notes with a portfolio of Irish Government Bonds puts in place a permanent, finite and viable solution in terms of a significant portion of the shortfall in banking financing that has emerged through the Irish financial crisis. Following an independent valuation process, the Special Liquidators will sell the assets of IBRC

(which are subject to a floating charge which secures IBRC debt to the Central Bank which will be sold to NAMA) to third parties at or above their independent valuation and failing that the Special Liquidators will sell the assets to NAMA at their valuation price. The measure has the further advantage of achieving efficiencies by housing all legacy assets in one vehicle. Government took the view that it made little sense at this point to retain two State organisations performing broadly similar functions and that, in the interests of costs and efficiency, it was appropriate for NAMA to purchase the assets of IBRC.

General Government Debt

53. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will set out in tabular form, by year, for 2013 onwards, the forecast impact on general government deficit and general government debt of the proposed new scheme to substitute the promissory notes provided to the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation with sovereign and NAMA bonds. [7720/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware the Irish Government Bonds that have been issued in exchange for the Promissory Notes are floating rate bonds. The coupon on these bonds is 6-month Euribor plus a margin ranging from 2.50% to 2.68%. Given the nature of this floating rate it is impossible to be accurate with regard to the exact interest cost in 2013 to 2015.

Information was released by the Department of Finance last week analysing the impact of the transaction on the general government deficit and debt over the period 2013 – 2015. As part of the explanatory information that was released, estimates were produced which showed interest costs for 2013-2015 and ELG costs for 2013.

The following tables set out the impact of the transaction on general government deficit (GGB) and general government debt (GGD) based upon no policy change.

General Government Deficit Impact (€M)	2013	2014	2015
Underlying GGB per Budget 2013 document	(12,645)	(8,905)	(5,325)
Adjustments			
1. Promissory Notes - interest savings	1,875	1,775	1,675
2. Government Bonds – interest costs	(800)	(875)	(950)
3. ELG claim costs*	(1,000)	-	-
4. Interest cost of payments under ELG	(50)	(50)	(50)
5. Change in CBI surplus dividend income	-	50	125
6. Interest cost savings (incl. interest on interest)	-	100	225

General Government Deficit Impact (€M)	2013	2014	2015
7. NAMA true-up**	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Change in underlying GGB due to transaction	25	1,000	1,025
Underlying GGB post-transaction	(12,620)	(7,905)	(4,300)
Pre-Transaction Underlying GGB/ Nominal GDP	(7.5%)	(5.1%)	(2.9%)
Post-Transaction Underlying GGB/ Nominal GDP	(7.5%)	(4.5%)	(2.4%)
Change	0.0%	0.6%	0.6%

*Estimated ELG claim range: €0.9 - €1.1 billion.

**Unknown until end of valuation process.

Note: Budget 2013 forecasts assume no dividends paid by IBRC to the State; table may contain rounding differences and figures are rounded to nearest €25 million; future interest costs to determine the financial impacts are best estimates.

General Government Debt Impact (€M)	2013	2014	2015
GGD per Budget 2013 document	203,500	209,200	211,900
Adjustments			
1. Promissory Notes - interest savings	(500)	(1,825)	(1,750)
2. Government Bonds – interest costs	800	875	950
3. ELG claim costs*	1,000	-	-
4. Interest cost of payments under ELG	50	50	50
5. Change in CBI surplus dividend income	-	(50)	(125)
6. Interest cost savings (incl. interest on interest)	-	(100)	(225)
7. NAMA true-up**	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Change in GGD in year	1,350	(1,050)	(1,100)
Cumulative change in GGD	1,350	300	(800)

General Government Debt Impact (€M)	2013	2014	2015
GGD post-transaction	204,850	209,500	211,100
Pre-Transaction Underlying GGB/ Nominal GDP	121.3%	120.2%	116.8%
Post-Transaction Underlying GGB/ Nominal GDP	122.1%	120.3%	116.4%
Change	0.8%	0.2%	(0.4%)

*Estimated ELG claim range: €0.9 - €1.1billion

** Unknown until end of valuation process

Note: Budget 2013 forecasts assume no dividends paid by IBRC to the State; table may contain rounding differences and figures are rounded to nearest €25 million; future interest costs to determine the financial impacts are best estimates

Note that the tables showing the GGB and GGD impacts assume that the full portfolio of Government bonds are priced at an interest margin of 270 basis points over 6-month EURIBOR. The Government bond portfolios were ultimately priced at a range of different interest margins over 6-month EURIBOR.

Copies of this material is available on the Department of Finance website under the following links:<http://www.finance.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=7543> <http://www.finance.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=7545>

The Department has not produced figures for the Debt and Deficit effects beyond 2015.

Government Bonds

54. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will outline the terms of any new bonds which he proposes to issue as part of the proposed new scheme to substitute the promissory notes provided to the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation with sovereign and NAMA bonds. [7721/13]

55. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will confirm the date upon which he proposes to issue sovereign bonds as part of the proposed new scheme to substitute the promissory notes provided to the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation with sovereign and National Asset Management Agency bonds. [7722/13]

65. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the way the floating interest rate on the sovereign bonds replacing promissory notes will be calculated;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7732/13]

68. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the duration and maturity of the sovereign bonds and the coupon rates of each one;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7735/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 54, 55, 65 and 68 together.

The exchange of Irish Government Bonds for the IBRC Promissory took place on Friday 8 February 2013. The Deputy refers to the substitution of the Promissory Notes provided to Irish Bank Resolution Corporation with National Asset Management Agency bonds however this is not the case.

With regard to the question submitted by the Deputy about the duration and maturity of sovereign bonds I am going to assume that he is referring to the sovereign bonds issued to discharge the liability under the Promissory Notes and not the total stock of Irish sovereign bonds.

With this in mind, eight new Floating Rate Treasury Bonds have been issued to discharge the Promissory Notes liability consisting of:

a 25 year, €2bn bond maturing in 2038 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.50%;

a 28 year €2bn bond maturing in 2041 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.53%;

a 30 year, €2bn bond maturing in 2043 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.57%;

a 32 year, €3bn bond maturing in 2045 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.60%;

a 34 year, €3bn bond maturing in 2047 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.62%;

a 36 year, €3bn bond maturing in 2049 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.65%;

a 38 year, €5bn bond maturing in 2051 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.67%; and

a 40 year, €5bn bond maturing in 2053 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.68%.

The bonds will pay interest every six months (June and December).

This information is set out in tabular form on the NTMA's website at the following link: <http://www.ntma.ie/news/ntma-issues-eight-new-floating-rate-treasury-bonds-in-exchange-for-promissory-notes/>

The Deputy refers to the terms of any new bonds which will be issued. As is the case with all Irish sovereign bonds there are detailed offering circulars available on the NTMA website which outline the terms and conditions in detail. I attach the link here: <http://www.ntma.ie/business-areas/funding-and-debt-management/government-bonds/>

Government Bonds

56. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will confirm the maximum period for which the Central Bank of Ireland may hold any sovereign bond issued as part of the proposed bond issued as part of the proposed new scheme to substitute the promissory notes provided to the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation with sovereign and National Asset Management Agency bonds; and the factors that will affect the period for which the Central Bank has

discretion in any decision to hold the sovereign bonds. [7723/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank have undertaken that minimum of bonds will be sold in accordance with the following schedule: €0.5bn by the end of 2014, €0.5bn per annum from 2015 to 2018, €1bn per annum from 2019 to 2023 and €2bn per annum from 2024 onwards.

This schedule of mandatory sales would exhaust the portfolio in 2032. The bonds will be placed in the Central Bank's trading portfolio and sold as soon as possible, provided that conditions of financial stability permit. The disposal strategy will maintain full compliance with the Treaty prohibition on monetary financing.

IBRC Liquidation

57. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide the number of depositors and the total amount of deposits in Irish Bank Resolution Corporation on 6 February 2013: and the number of deposits in excess of €100,000; and the overall value of such deposits and the total excess of those deposits over €100,000 each. [7724/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware, on 5 February 2013 the Oireachtas passed legislation (Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Act 2013), appointing joint Special Liquidators to IBRC with immediate effect to wind up its business and operations.

At this early stage of the special liquidation Special Liquidators are engaged in intensive processes which involve inter alia, asserting control over the businesses, processes, systems and personnel of IBRC. It is important that focus is placed on assessing, reorganising and restructuring the day-to-day activities of the Bank to meet the primary objective of ensuring the purpose of the special liquidation is achieved, as this is key to ensuring that value is extracted from the liquidation.

As such the Bank is not in a position to provide the information requested by the Deputy.

IBRC Liquidation

58. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a schedule of bonds payable by Irish Bank Resolution Corporation on 6 February 2013 showing the type of bond, the date redeemable, the coupon and the redeemable amount. [7725/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware, on 5 February 2013 the Oireachtas passed legislation (Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Act 2013), appointing joint Special Liquidators to IBRC with immediate effect to wind up its business and operations.

At this early stage of the special liquidation Special Liquidators are engaged in intensive processes which involve inter alia, asserting control over the businesses, processes, systems and personnel of IBRC. It is important that focus is placed on assessing, reorganising and restructuring the day-to-day activities of the Bank to meet the primary objective of ensuring the purpose of the special liquidation is achieved, as this is key to ensuring that value is extracted from the liquidation.

As such the Bank is not in a position to provide the information requested by the Deputy.

I thank the Deputy for his understanding in what is a crucial phase in the liquidation.

IBRC Liquidation

59. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will clarify the way outstanding bonds in Irish Bank Resolution Corporation will be dealt with as part of the liquidation announced on 6 February 2013. [7726/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Certain bonds outstanding in Irish Bank Resolution Corporation will be covered under the Eligible Liabilities Guarantee Scheme (ELG Scheme) which provides for a State guarantee for eligible liabilities. To the extent other bondholders do not have the right to claim under the ELG Scheme (such as unguaranteed bondholders and subordinated bondholders), they will retain their claims according to the priority of claims in liquidation and will likely have to await the outcome of the liquidation process to recognise any payment of their claim.

IBRC Liquidation

60. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will estimate the cost to the Central Bank of Ireland in compensating depositors at the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation for deposits up to €100,000; and if he will confirm if there is a pre-existing fund maintained by the CBI for such events;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7727/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised that the total deposits held by IBRC was €323 million at 31 January 2013. The Special Liquidator submitted preliminary DGS information to the Central Bank of Ireland on 12 February which estimates eligible deposits of €123 million. If the threshold for DGS qualification is mechanically applied (i.e. €100,000 per person), the payment in respect of DGS-covered deposits would be just over €30 million. However, the total DGS pay-out is likely to be significantly lower than this figure after the Special Liquidator excludes accounts such as:

- Accounts that have been legally pledged as security against other liabilities (in IBRC, NAMA or possibly other third parties),
- Accounts of Large Companies (only Small Companies, as defined in the Companies Act 1986, qualify for DGS pay-out).

It will take some weeks before the final pay-out figure will be known. The aim of the Central Bank is to pay compensation within 20 working days to depositors who have been duly verified as eligible. The Central Bank of Ireland maintains a Deposit Protection Account which will be used to fund any Deposit Guarantee Scheme pay-out. The current balance on this account is €388 million and this is funded by credit institutions who contribute 0.2% of their total deposit.

IBRC Liquidation

61. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will lay before Dáil Éireann the audited or unaudited accounts for Irish Bank Resolution at 31 December 2012. [7728/13]

62. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will outline the arrangements that will apply for the publication of audited accounts for Irish Bank Resolution Corpora-

tion for the year ended 31 December 2012. [7729/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 61 and 62 together.

I have been advised by the Special Liquidator that no audited accounts will be required to be published for Irish Bank Resolution Corporation for the year ended 31 December 2012. The Minister for Finance does not intend to lay the unaudited accounts at 31 December 2012 before Dáil Éireann.

IBRC Liquidation

63. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will confirm the treatment of equity in Irish Bank Resolution Corporation and if it will be returned to the State; if so when; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7730/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware, on 5 February 2013 the Oireachtas passed legislation (Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Act 2013), appointing joint Special Liquidators to IBRC (with immediate effect to wind up its business and operations. The normal Companies Act's priorities will apply in this liquidation process. The proceeds from the disposal of IBRC's assets will be used to repay creditors subject to the normal legal priorities.

If there is any residual equity in IBRC following the completion of the liquidation process and payment of all creditors, this will be returned to the State as the owner of IBRC.

IBRC Liquidation

64. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if it is a term of the arrangement to replace the promissory notes in Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, that IBRC must remain a corporate entity for the duration of the replacement sovereign bonds, that is, until 2053. [7731/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware, following the passing of the IBRC Act 2013 last week, IBRC has now been put into liquidation with Special Liquidators appointed to manage the process. Upon appointment of the Special Liquidators the Central Bank of Ireland became economic owners of the Promissory Notes which have now been replaced with a portfolio of Irish Government bonds. As such, there is no connection between the duration of the Irish Government bonds issued to replace the Promissory Notes and the period for which IBRC must remain a corporate entity. The Special Liquidators are working to wind down IBRC in an expedient a manner as possible and this is expected to occur in a much shorter time period than the duration of any of the bonds issued.

Question No. 65 answered with Question No. 54.

Government Bonds

66. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of interest that will be paid in each of 2013, 2014 and 2015 on the sovereign bonds that replace the promissory notes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7733/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware the Irish Government Bonds that have been issued in exchange for the Promissory Notes are floating rate bonds. The coupon on these bonds is 6-month Euribor plus a margin ranging from 2.50% to 2.68%. Given the nature of this floating rate it is impossible to be accurate with regard to the exact interest cost in 2013 to 2015. As part of the explanatory information that was released by the Department of Finance in relation to the transaction last week, estimates were produced which showed an interest expense of €750 million for 2013, €875 million for 2014 and €950 million for 2015. A copy of this presentation is available on the Department of Finance website under the following link: <http://www.finance.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=7543>

It was also highlighted in this presentation that the interest costs shown were best estimates.

Government Bonds

67. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the net present value of the bonds that will replace the promissory notes and the net present value gain in this arrangement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7734/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will know, the Promissory Notes were replaced with a portfolio of long term non-amortising Irish Government bonds as a result of undertaking last week's transaction. The net present value of the portfolio of bonds is €25bn which is equal to the par value of the Promissory Notes that they have replaced. With regard to the net present value gain in this arrangement, as the Deputy is aware, the calculation of a net present value is based on a number of mathematical assumptions, including what discount rate to apply and assumptions around future refinancing rates, all of which will depend upon the outcome of future events. These assumptions can have a material impact on the ultimate valuation and it is subject to a wide range of possible outcomes. For that reason, the Department did not produce a net present value figure for publication last week and I am not in a position to give one now. I can assure the Deputy that a key determinant of the value of the new arrangement was debt sustainability.

Question No. 68 answered with Question No. 54.

Residential Institutions Redress Scheme

69. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding progress in securing additional financial contributions from religious congregations towards redress for survivors of residential child abuse; the amount of additional funding that has been sought; if the congregations have responded positively in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7475/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The cost of the response to residential institutional child abuse is now estimated to be in the region of €1.47 billion. The Government remains of the view that this cost should be shared on a 50:50 basis, between the State and those who were responsible for the management of institutions where horrendous abuse took place.

Following the disappointing response from the congregations to augment their contributions under the 2002 Indemnity Agreement, following the publication of the Ryan Report, I proposed the transfer of school infrastructure to the State at no cost to the Exchequer for the benefit of the taxpayer as one mechanism to allow those involved the opportunity to shoulder

their share of the costs.

I have continued to engage with the Congregations to seek a greater contribution from them and I intend to update my Cabinet colleagues in relation to the progress on the negotiations to date.

Student Grant Scheme Application Numbers

70. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will clarify the number of third level grants that remain to be processed; if he will provide detail in tabular form of the grants still to be processed by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7531/13]

85. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he has taken to address the delays in the processing of student grant applications, the number of student grant applications that have been received by Student Universal Support Ireland; the number that have been processed, awarded, refused, awaiting decisions to date, the number of applications that were received from County Kerry and the number of these that were processed, received, refused, awarded, awaiting a decision to date; if he will reassure all applications and their families, that all fully completed applications will be processed at the earliest possible date;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7710/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 70 and 85 together. I understand from Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that grants processing is largely up to date and that complete applications are now being dealt with as the requested documentation comes in. The following table provides a breakdown of the processing position of student grant applications received by SUSI on a county basis. The data provided is at a point in time on the 13 February, 2013. It gives the position for student grant applications for attendance at both further and higher education. It includes data in relation to applications received from County Kerry. This data has been provided to my Department by SUSI. SUSI is continuing to make payments on a weekly basis to ensure students can get paid their grant as expeditiously as possible, once they have been awarded a grant. Those awarded a grant must supply bank account details and confirmation of registration must be received from the institution in order for the first instalment to be paid.

Some students have still not provided any of the necessary supporting documentation to enable their grant applications to be progressed to finality while others have provided some, but not all, of this documentation. This is similar to the position in previous years. SUSI is currently offering those students that still wish to proceed with their grant applications a final opportunity to submit the documentation that has been requested before SUSI close their applications.

SUSI Applications - Processing Position by County

County	Total applications received	Incomplete Applications	Applications where all requested documentation submitted	Awarded	Refused or Cancelled	Applications currently with SUSI for processing	Maintenance Payments
Carlow	1012	202	810	550	255	5	359
Cavan	1367	277	1090	730	350	10	561
Clare	1846	395	1451	989	438	24	697

County	Total applications received	Incomplete Applications	Applications where all requested documentation submitted	Awarded	Refused or Cancelled	Applications currently with SUSI for processing	Maintenance Payments
Cork	7129	1620	5509	3552	1908	49	2393
Donegal	2978	596	2382	1667	683	32	1146
Dublin	14818	3863	10955	6338	4481	136	4135
Galway	4566	1004	3562	2418	1113	31	1558
Kerry	2551	508	2043	1386	643	14	937
Kildare	2813	625	2188	1325	846	17	916
Kilkenny	1435	299	1136	752	376	8	518
Laois	1108	247	861	585	267	9	427
Leitrim	658	145	513	349	160	4	252
Limerick	2962	726	2236	1510	704	22	952
Longford	779	158	621	413	206	2	291
Louth	2224	487	1737	1131	588	18	778
Mayo	2576	545	2031	1413	601	17	1007
Meath	2528	569	1959	1247	694	18	908
Monaghan	1147	238	909	622	281	6	467
Offaly	1266	234	1032	691	328	13	491
Roscommon	1222	239	983	674	302	7	470
Sligo	1267	308	959	640	312	7	424
Tipperary	2723	562	2161	1454	697	10	998
Waterford	1970	413	1557	983	567	7	631
Westmeath	1718	339	1379	905	456	18	647
Wexford	2405	465	1940	1328	603	9	953
Wicklow	2013	411	1602	1015	576	11	737
Outside Ireland	279	104	175	42	127	6	18
Totals	69,360	15,579	53,781*	34,709**	18,562	510#	23,671##

*Of these in the case of some 53,271 applications processing has been completed (awarded, provisionally awarded or refused).

** This figure includes some 1,049 provisionally awarded awaiting final course acceptance and some 6,833 students awarded a “fees only grant”.

This figure includes some 103 late applications awaiting provisional assessment.

The total number awarded and due to be paid a maintenance grant by SUSI is some 3,156 students. The majority of these students currently awaiting payment will be paid within the next two weeks, depending on their submission of bank account details. A number of students will be paid on Friday 15th February 2013.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

71. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will confirm that the July provision programme will be offered to pupils this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7587/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Participation in my Department's July Provision Scheme is an option for all special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes catering for children with autism or severe to profound general learning disability that choose to extend their education services through the month of July.

All qualifying schools will be informed of arrangements pertaining to the scheme for 2013 once they are finalised.

Student Grant Scheme Appeals

72. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will clarify if a person (details supplied) has been awarded their Student Universal Support Ireland grant appeal, as it is unclear on the basis of two conflicting and upsetting communications this Deputy has received from SUSI; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7592/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have been informed by Student Universal Support Ireland that the grant award letter that issued on the 28th January 2013 to the student referred to by the Deputy was sent in error.

The Deputy will appreciate that in the context of SUSI having received in excess of 67,000 applications that some errors may inevitably arise when handling a high volume of applications within a relatively short timeframe.

SUSI have confirmed that on review the grant has been refused and a letter outlining the position issued on the 8th February, 2013. If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by SUSI, and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board.

Education Schemes

73. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of grants to former residents of institutions and their relatives to assist them in availing of educational services that have been paid under the criteria for awarding grants by the Education Finance Board; the number of such applications that have been received; the number that have been decided on; the average payment in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7605/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): From enquiries made with the Education Finance Board, I understand that the Board approved 1,124 grants during 2012. The corresponding figures for 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 were 892, 1200, 1526, 1914, 1901 and 2108 respectively. Since 2006 a total of 10,665 grants have been approved from 11,392 applications, with the remaining 727 being unsuccessful or withdrawn.

The Board indicated in November 2011 that it expected that the funds available to it would be fully allocated on applications already received and accordingly it publicised that it would not be in a position to process any applications received after 30th November, 2011. The Board has advised that its criteria specified the maximum amounts of awards payable in individual circumstances and that it does not calculate average grant payments.

Proposed Legislation

74. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress that has been made to date on the drafting of the education (admission to school) Bill; when he expects heads to be approved and for the Bill to be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7606/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that in 2011, I launched a discussion paper on school enrolment. The “Discussion Paper on a Regulatory Framework for School Enrolment” contains suggestions on how to make the process of enrolling in schools more open, equitable and consistent and is available on my Department’s website.

I also invited education partners and interested parties to submit their views to my Department. The feedback from this consultation will help inform the nature and scope of a new regulatory framework for school enrolment. I intend to bring legislative proposals to Government this year, the primary aim of which will be to ensure that every child is treated fairly and that every child has a place at school.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

75. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a special education needs organiser who was assigned to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 11 in view of the fact that this person is currently on extended leave; the efforts that have been made to find a replacement or a referral to assist this person; if he will expedite this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7612/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is an independent agency which, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOS), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, in accordance with my Department’s established criteria.

As the issue raised by the Deputy is an operational matter which relates to internal NCSE staffing arrangements, I have arranged for the this question to be forwarded to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Schools Extra Curricular Activities

76. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to promote volunteerism and collective activities outside school hours in view of the fact that all the evidence shows that involvement in these activities improves confidence and academic achievements. [7621/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy may be aware that there is already a very strong tradition of our teachers contributing generously to the many out of school activities organised by their schools. This is one of the strengths of our education system and this involvement contributes greatly to the breadth and experience of the education given to our children. This work includes building links with local youth and sports organisations at local level.

This valuable work was highlighted most recently in the context of the Action Plan on Bullying which I launched with my colleague, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Deputy Fitzgerald on the 29th January last.

The Deputy may also be aware that the Department of Children and Youth Affairs supports and promotes non-formal education and developmental opportunities for young people through the Youth Work Sector. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs also oversees the implementation of the National Play and National Recreation Policies by Local Authorities.

School Curriculum

77. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he intends to take to develop a more targeted approach to the way self-esteem and confidence building can be promoted within the curriculum. [7622/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I would like to inform the Deputy that in developing the new Framework for Junior Cycle which I published last October, I was very aware of the importance of meeting the needs and interests of the students and of enabling them to achieve their full potential and be properly challenged through improving their learning experiences and outcomes.

The new Framework has 8 Principles - one of which is Wellbeing, whereby the student experience in junior cycle will directly contribute to their physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing and resilience. There are 24 Statements of Learning which describe the core of learning at junior cycle. It is through enjoyment, interest and being proactive that the young person will learn.

In addition, there are 8 key skills in the Framework. The obvious ones are literacy and numeracy but all 8 skills will be embedded in their learning through subjects, the new short courses and other learning experiences. With the skill of “staying well” it is expected that the young person will enhance their confidence, be enabled to be co-operative and respecting of difference.

The changes in assessment will also allow the student to gain evidence of learning as they progress through junior cycle. Positive feedback from teachers and, in fact, from parents will also ensure that the self-esteem, confidence and motivation of the young person is maintained throughout the three years. Through a commitment to the implementation of all aspects of the Framework, the educational system will be able to deliver a junior cycle that places the needs of the student at the core of learning and teaching and thereby improves the quality of the learning experiences and outcomes of all students.

School Patronage

78. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to any changes to patronage of a school (details supplied) in County Dublin. [7624/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to inform the Deputy that there are currently no plans for change of patronage to the school referred to in County Dublin. Consideration of change of patronage can only occur in partnership with the patrons and school communities concerned. Surveys of parental preferences regarding primary school patronage were conducted in 38 areas across the country within the last number of weeks, in-

cluding the area in question. The surveys closed on Friday 8th February and the responses are currently being validated and analysed by my Department.

Schools Building Projects Status

79. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when construction of a new school (details supplied) in County Cork will commence; the expected completion and opening dates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7629/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The major school building project referred to by the Deputy, is currently at an early stage of Architectural Planning.

The project is included on the five year Capital Investment programme, announced in March 2012, to progress to Construction in 2015/16.

Student Support Schemes Issues

80. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding available to students who are 19 years of age attending FETAC Level 5 courses in adult education centres where the family does not have the financial resources to support them and the income support is available in these situations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7652/13]

90. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding available to students who are 19 years of age attending FETAC Level 5 courses in adult education centres where the family does not have the financial resources to support them and the income support is available in these situations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7762/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 80 and 90 together.

The decision on eligibility for new student grants is a matter for Student Universal Support Ireland or SUSI. Students, including those wishing to undertake Post Leaving Cert courses, are assessed by SUSI to determine whether or not they satisfy all of the conditions of the student grant scheme in relation to means, residency, nationality and previous academic attainment.

To determine eligibility, a student may submit a fully completed online grant application to SUSI, via studentfinance.ie, once the application process for the 2013/14 academic year opens.

FÁS Training Programmes

81. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if participants on momentum courses will receive travel and meal allowances as they do with FÁS courses, depending on their circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7655/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): As part of the Government's "Action Plan for Jobs" initiative, FÁS is administering the MOMENTUM Programme under which €20 million has been committed by the Department of Education & Skills through the National Training Fund. The aim of the programme is to provide a range of quality, relevant education & training interventions for up to 6,500 individuals who are long-term unemployed.

Under the eligibility criteria of MOMENTUM, all unemployed participants must be pre-approved by the Department of Social Protection before they can participate in the programme. Participants on the programme will not receive any travel or meal allowances. However, participants will maintain their current social welfare entitlement for as long as they are entitled to receive it under the Department of Social Protection eligibility criteria

Pension Provisions

82. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of relief teaching days allocated to teachers on a Departmental pension in the past school year at primary and post primary respectively; the corresponding figures for the last school term; the steps being taken to reduce this number; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7663/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information requested by the Deputy is being compiled and will be forwarded to him.

Teachers' Remuneration

83. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline the payment arrangements in place in respect of yard supervision carried out by two teachers at a school (details supplied) in County Dublin; if he will explain the reason these teachers still have outstanding payment due for 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7665/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The outstanding payments due to the two people referred to by the Deputy will issue to them on 28th February 2013.

School Enrolments

84. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a request for additional funding to address acute capacity concerns in respect of a school (details supplied) in Dublin 11; in view of increasing enrolment numbers and the fact that in the coming 2013-14 school year the school will not have a classroom to accommodate an additional allocated teacher, if he will outline the assistance available to address concerns regarding the overall infrastructural needs of the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7703/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can confirm for the Deputy that the school to which she refers was approved grant aid on 3rd August 2012 to build an additional classroom. A condition of the grant was that 70% was to have been drawn 6 months from the date of sanction and the remaining 30% grant is to be drawn down within 12 months of approval. To date the school has not drawn down any of the grant aid approved.

On 24th January 2013, the school submitted a further application for funding to provide additional accommodation. This is currently being assessed and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as this process has been completed.

Question No. 85 answered with Question No. 70.

Third Level Fees

86. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will clarify the degree programmes and additional special requirements he was referring to when replying to parliamentary questions which related to changes in funding to Gaeltacht placements for first year B Ed students attending Mary Immaculate College when he stated: this move brings the primary ITE courses more into line with other degree programmes where students are required to bear the costs of additional special requirements themselves; and if he will confirm that students are always required to pay tuition fees in Ireland in these circumstances. [7748/13]

87. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills in view of changes in funding to Gaeltacht placements for first year B Ed students attending Mary Immaculate College, which will result in students having to pay an additional €1,400 biannual fee, if his Department has considered expanding the student assistance fund which in its current form can only be accessed by a limited number of students; and if he will further consider introducing a more robust system to support students who do not qualify for the grant. [7749/13]

88. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills in view of his recent decision to allocate an additional €3 million to the student assistance fund representatives, if he will consider allocating an additional €1 million to the fund in order to assist the estimated 1,000 additional students who will be directly affected by changes to the Gaeltacht placement scheme. [7750/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 86 to 88, inclusive, together.

As part of the Government's budgetary considerations and the Comprehensive Expenditure Review carried out in 2011, a decision was made to abolish the payments by this Department towards the cost of attendance at Gaeltacht courses by students commencing their programme of primary initial teacher education. The decision came into effect for the 2012/13 academic year. As the Deputy will be aware, priority is being given to protecting resources for front line services in the coming years. To assist with the costs of the Gaeltacht placement, primary initial teacher education students who are in receipt of a student grant which includes a 100% fee grant, or who would have qualified for a full fee grant but for the Free Fees Schemes, can apply for funding towards travel and accommodation costs under the field trip element of a fee grant, subject to the normal terms and conditions of the student grant scheme.

Other programmes where additional special requirements are funded by students themselves would include programmes in areas such as languages, architecture, art, geology, geography, history and science, where trips or placements are an integral part of the course. The nature and duration of these and the costs involved vary between programmes.

Apart from the student grant system, in circumstances of particular need students may apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund which assists students in third-level institutions in exceptional financial need. Information on the fund is available through the Access Officer in the third level institution attended.

Student Grant Scheme Reform

89. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his intentions with regard to family farms; if it is true that he is proposing to take the value of lands into consideration when doing assessments for students seeking college grants; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [7752/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that a dedicated capital assets test implementation group was established to bring forward detailed implementation proposals on new means testing arrangements for student grants, to include the value of assets.

I have received a draft report from the implementation group. This is currently under consideration and I will be consulting further with my cabinet colleagues in the matter in due course.

Question No. 90 answered with Question No. 80.

Property Ownership

91. **Deputy Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason a property was sold to the beneficial owner (details supplied) in County Cork as a sale absolute by use of a S31 application which allowed the Minister for Finance to waive any interest vesting, under the State Property Act 1954, in the state on the dissolution of a company [7659/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Section 28 (2) of the State Property Act 1954, provides that the Minister for Finance assumes responsibility for all personal property and land vested in or held in trust for a body corporate (other than personal property or land held by such body in trust for another person) immediately prior to its dissolution. Upon the dissolution of the body corporate, such property becomes State property. This function transferred in July 2011 to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform under the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act, 2011 and S.I. No. 418/2011 Finance (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order 2011. The effect of Section 28 is that the Minister does not hold the assets of dissolved companies as beneficial owner. He holds them in trust. The title which the Minister acquires under this Section has been described as a defeasible title since, if the dissolved company is restored to the Register of Companies within twenty years of the date of its dissolution, its property is automatically restored to it. The State Property Act also includes, in Section 31, a power for the Minister to waive the interest acquired under Section 28 of the Act.

It is understood that the property which is the subject of the current question was held within a company which was struck off the Register of Companies in September, 1972 for failure to file annual returns with the Companies Office. The beneficial owner of the property applied to the Department of Finance for a waiver of the interest acquired by the Minister for Finance under the provisions of the State Property Act and that waiver, in respect of which the consideration was £160, was completed in October, 1986, approximately 14 years after the dissolution of the company. The effect of the waiver, which was not a sale by the State, would have been to allow the beneficial owner to complete the process of assembling a satisfactory title. The waiver itself would have formed only a limited element in the establishment of that title and the transaction was a normal exercise of Departmental functions. The price which the beneficial owner may have secured in a subsequent sale was not a matter for consideration in the context of the waiver.

Public Sector Pensions Legislation

92. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the public

pension options available to women who left the public service as a result of the marriage bar and returned to the public service in each of the years 2000 to 2005 inclusive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7684/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Prior to 1974 pensionable female Public Servants were generally required to resign on marriage and, depending on their service, received a marriage gratuity in lieu of any pension benefits.

Public Servants who received a marriage gratuity and returned to the Public Service have the option of (a) refunding the gratuity (plus interest where applicable) and having all reckonable prior service (i.e. before their resignation on marriage) aggregated with subsequent reckonable services for Superannuation purposes or (b) not refunding the gratuity and having their reckonable service for superannuation purposes commence from the date of their re-appointment only.

Public Servants who had to resign on marriage but where not eligible to receive the marriage gratuity may be able to have their entire service pensionable on payment of appropriate back contributions.

Budget 2014 Issues

93. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimated time of the publication of the estimates for 2014 in view of the fact that the publication of the estimates and the Budget are to be brought forward; the implications for discussing the estimates in the Oireachtas prior to their approval by Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7623/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): One of two draft economic and budgetary regulations, known as the “two-pack”, nearing finalisation in Europe, will introduce a common budgetary timeline for all euro area Member States. While this regulation would have implications for the existing budget and Estimates arrangements in Ireland, it is not yet possible to say when political agreement will be reached between the Commission, European Parliament and Council of the EU.

When this regulation is adopted and in force, all euro area Member States will be required to publish their draft budget for central government and the main parameters of all other General Government sub-sectors no later than 15 October each year. The common budgetary timeline also foresees that the final budget should be adopted or fixed upon annually by 31 December.

Accordingly, much of our existing budgetary process, which is currently completed in the first week of December, will have to be finalised earlier in the year. As the two-pack has not yet been adopted, this requirement has not yet come into force but I can assure the Deputy that we will take the necessary actions to ensure that Ireland will comply with the new requirements once they have been agreed.

As regards the implications for discussion by Oireachtas Committees of the Estimates prior to the Budget, my Department will continue to work with Oireachtas officials to ensure the ‘whole of year budgeting’, announced in the *Comprehensive Expenditure Report 2012-2014*, continues under any revised timetabling arrangements. This reform is an important new dimension of accountability and enhances the role and the policy relevance of the Oireachtas, in particular with regard to the role of Committees in *ex ante* consideration of resource allocation priorities in each area. It is important that this be maintained and, indeed, improved upon.

Insurance Coverage

94. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide an update on the negotiations (details supplied) with the Irish Insurance Federation on the viability of a State insurance system for persons who are unable to obtain home related insurance from the private insurance market. [7628/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): I wish to clarify that the contacts I have had with the Irish Insurance Federation (IIF) solely concern the difficulty some people are experiencing in obtaining flood cover insurance in areas in which the OPW has carried out flood defence works. These discussions are centred on the establishment of a sustainable system of information exchange with the insurance industry identifying flood alleviation schemes and works completed where the standard of protection afforded by these works can be verified. The discussions have not dealt with any other aspect of household insurance nor have they addressed the matter of a State backed insurance system. There are no plans to introduce any such system.

A working group has been established between the OPW, the IIF and representatives of several insurance companies to progress the work in order that the insurance industry can be more fully informed as to the extent of OPW funded investment in flood protection measures and to ensure that investment is taken into account by the insurance industry in assessing flood risk for insurance purposes. The first meeting of this working group took place in January and both sides are committed to working constructively to progress the matter.

Government Construction Contracts Committee Membership

95. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the names of current members of the Government Construction Contracts Committee, along with their titles; the Departments they represent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7701/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Government Construction Contracts Committee (GCCC) was set up under Section 11 of Circular 40/02 ‘Public Procurement Guidelines - revision of existing procedures for approval of certain contracts in the Central Government sector’, which reconfigured the existing arrangements for the Government Contracts Committee. The GCCC deals with public works procurement and related issues.

The GCCC has key representatives from the main construction-related departments and agencies including civil, building and administrative representation. Representatives on GCCC change from time to time. The current details of the GCCC at 13 February 2013 as requested by the Deputy are set out in the following table.

Department/Agency	Members	Title
Dept. of Public Expenditure & Reform	David O’Brien	Architect (Chairman)
Dept. of Public Expenditure & Reform	Ronnie Downes	Principal Officer
Dept. of Public Expenditure & Reform	Eileen Dalton	Assistant Principal (Secretariat to GCCC)
Dept. of Agriculture	John McHale	Assistant Chief Engineer

Department/Agency	Members	Title
Dept. of Defence	Neil Murphy	Head of QS Services
Dept. of Defence	Tadhg O'Doherty	Assistant Principal
Dept. of Education & Skills	Jonathan Bliss	Technical Manager
Dept. of Education & Skills	Larry McEvoy	Technical Manager
Dept. of the Environment, Community & Local Government	Gerry Galvin	Principal Adviser (Water)
Dept. of the Environment, Community & Local Government	Barry Lenihan	Senior Adviser
Dept. of Transport	John McCarthy	Senior Adviser
Health Service Executive	Eleanor Masterson	Deputy Chief Architectural Adviser
Health Service Executive	Peter Finnegan	Principal Quantity Survey- ing Adviser
Higher Education Authority	Damien Kilgannon	Technical Adviser Capital Programmes
National Roads Authority	Richella Mulvihill	Project Manager
National Roads Authority	Gerry O'Brien	Regional Manager
National Development Finance Agency	Gerard Cahillane	Deputy Director, Head of Finance & Operations
National Development Finance Agency	Steven Burgess	Head of Project Manage- ment.
Office of Public Works	Georgina Keeley	Higher Executive Officer
Office of Public Works	Ciaran O'Connor	Principal Architect (State Architect)
Office of Public Works	Gerard Kennedy	Assistant Principal Officer
Rail Procurement Agency	Fergal Ruane	Head of the Legal Team and Secretary to the Agency

Departmental Staff Retirements

96. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if applicants from the Department of Social Protection early retirement scheme will be considered under the next retirement package programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7708/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): There are no plans for an early retirement scheme in the Civil Service. As the Deputy may be aware I recently announced that arrangements are being drawn up for targeted voluntary redundancy in specific areas of the public service where staff surpluses have been identified by management. At present there are no plans for a Voluntary Redundancy Scheme in the Department of Social Protection.

NSAI Staff

97. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the num-

ber of certification officers who have retired in the past five years from the National Standards Authority of Ireland; the number who have been re-engaged on a contractual basis or on a consultancy basis to carry out certification duties from NSAI clients, for new clients and or for the authority. [7664/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Over the past five years a total of 13 staff members, who were qualified Certification Officers, have retired from NSAI. Five of these Certification Officers were subsequently appointed, through an open tendering process, to the panel of 28 subcontractors NSAI use to carry out Certification duties. These persons are drawn down, as required, on a subcontract basis. This outsourcing arrangement is in line with the Principles set down in the Appendix to Chapter 1 of the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) relating to Service Delivery Options. All matters in relation to Public Service Pension Abatement rules are also adhered to.

Appointments to State Boards

98. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation when he will fill the four vacancies on the board of Shannon Development; the number of applications to fill the vacancies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7687/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to inform the Deputy that in summer 2011 my Department had, through the Public Appointments Service sought expressions of interests for what were then two vacancies on the Board of Shannon Development. There were a total of 71 expressions of interest in joining the Board of Shannon Development as a result of this exercise; however, I did not proceed with any appointments to the Board of Shannon Development in 2011.

Subsequently, as is the case with Shannon Development, the two longest serving Board Members resigned at the Shannon Development AGM in April 2012. This meant that there were a total of four vacancies on the Board of Shannon Development. However as the Deputy will be aware an announcement was made in 2012 to set up two Task Forces (Change Management and Aviation Business Development Task Forces) and a Steering Group to make recommendations to Government on the future of Shannon Airport and Shannon Development. Given this work, the only appointment made by me to the Board of Shannon Development in 2012 was the appointment of Stephen Curran of my Department to replace his predecessor, Mr Bob Keane.

The Deputy will be aware that the Groups mentioned earlier assisted the Government in making its decision to separate Shannon Airport from the Dublin Airport Authority in December 2012 last and in the on-going work of merging Shannon Development with Shannon Airport. As part of this process the Government also agreed to ensure commonality in appointments to the boards of both Shannon Development and Shannon Airport in preparation for the establishment of the new entity. In this regard, my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport appointed Rose Hynes as Chair of the Shannon Airport Authority in December 2012 and I wish to inform the Deputy that I have recently appointed Ms Hynes to the Board of Shannon Development. I intend to make further appointments to the Board of Shannon Development on the basis of commonality in due course.

Action Plan for Jobs

99. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will

outline the way the figure of 12,000 jobs created in the private sector as stated in the Action Plan for Jobs progress report was arrived at; and the number of these jobs that are part-time, full-time and temporary-casual. [7741/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The most recent Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) published by the CSO, which covers Quarter 3 2012, shows that there were approximately 4,300 fewer people in employment overall in the economy in that Quarter compared to Quarter 3 2011.

However, within those figures, the number of employees in the public sector reduced year-on-year by 16,200 (Table A3 of the QNHS refers). Implicitly, therefore, there were approximately 12,000 more people employed in the private sector in that period. This conclusion is supported by the job creation figures of IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland for 2012. In 2012, Enterprise Ireland client companies created more than 3,300 net new jobs, while IDA Ireland companies created over 6,500 net new jobs. QNHS data also shows that there was a net increase of 2,000 jobs in tourism in Q3 2012 – a sector which does not overlap with IDA or Enterprise Ireland activity.

While overall in the economy, there has been a trend towards a reduction in full-time employment and an increase in part-time employment, the IDA and Enterprise Ireland figures for 2012 relate to full-time jobs. Although job losses continue to be experienced in declining sectors such as construction, the positive results from the enterprise development agencies in 2012 underscores the merits of the Government's focus on innovation and export-driven sectors under the Action Plan for Jobs to create employment.

Enterprise Support Schemes

100. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number and value of applications made to the international start-up fund; and the value of investments made to date. [7743/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The International Start-up Fund was approved by the Enterprise Ireland Board on 13th July 2011, and has received several hundred enquiries since that date. These enquiries are developed on a continuous basis, and form a healthy pipeline of potential projects for the coming year. To date, 17 applications have been submitted to the Enterprise Ireland Investment Committee for consideration. All of these were approved with a combined approval of €3.86m.

Job Initiatives

101. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the total value of fees paid under the diaspora, job finders, fee scheme as part of succeed in Ireland; and the number of applications made and the total number of new jobs now in place as a result of this scheme. [7744/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Under the Succeed in Ireland initiative, IDA Ireland will pay a finder's fee of up to a maximum of €4,000 excluding VAT on the creation of a sustainable job i.e. a job that has been in place for two years. As the initiative has been in existence for only 11 months, no such fees have yet been paid.

IDA Ireland has informed me that since the launch of the Succeed in Ireland initiative on 8

March 2012, two projects, with the potential to create 40 jobs, have been approved. There have been 54 referrals, with potential to receive a reward, registered. The potential number of jobs which may be delivered from these referrals is in the region of 1,500.

An evaluation of the costs, benefits and impacts of the initiative will be undertaken by IDA Ireland later this year in consultation with my Department so that an informed decision can be taken on the merits of broadening out the initiative from a pilot one.

Job Creation Numbers

102. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs created by Enterprise Ireland under the high potential start-ups for each year since its establishment; and the total value of supports offered per year issued to high potential start-ups. [7745/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Over the period 2008-2012, Enterprise Ireland has supported a total of 413 High Potential Start Up companies.

Enterprise Ireland expenditure on HPSUs in 2012 is set out in the table.

However, in the time available, it is not possible to provide exact figures for job creation over this period, as it will require disaggregation of data across a number of different sources, for example:

- Number of jobs existing in each HPSU, prior to provision of EI support;
- Support to HPSUs does not include funds invested in the Irish VC industry which were subsequently invested in Irish companies including start-ups;
- Due to the nature of HPSUs, the returns in terms of jobs and exports, from the HPSUs supported will substantially occur in future years.

The information the Deputy requested is currently being compiled and a follow up response will issue shortly.

Inputs HPSU	Total Spend	Equity	Grants
Total HPSU Approvals	€35,885,836	€27,464,744	€8,421,092

Job Creation Numbers

103. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs lost and jobs created by Industrial Development Agency and Enterprise Ireland on a county by county basis for the last year. [7746/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Details of the number of full time jobs created and lost in IDA and Enterprise Ireland client companies is set out in the attached tabular statement, which is drawn from the Forfás Annual Employment Survey

I am delighted to say that 2012 was a particularly good year for job creation in Agency supported companies, with IDA client companies creating a total of 12,722 gross new full time

jobs and Enterprise Ireland client companies creating a total of 12,861 gross new full time jobs.

Table showing the number of full time jobs gained and lost in IDA Ireland and EI supported companies per county, in 2012

-	IDA	EI
Data	2012	2012
Carlow Full Time Jobs Created	116	152
Carlow Full Time Jobs Lost	1	121
Cavan Full Time Jobs Created	43	374
Cavan Full Time Jobs Lost	39	244
Clare Full Time Jobs Created	37	133
Clare Full Time Jobs Lost	28	105
Cork Full Time Jobs Created	1,979	1,663
Cork Full Time Jobs Lost	991	818
Donegal Full Time Jobs Created	186	180
Donegal Full Time Jobs Lost	18	309
Dublin Full Time Jobs Created	6,389	4,097
Dublin Full Time Jobs Lost	3,059	3,415
Galway Full Time Jobs Created	859	572
Galway Full Time Jobs Lost	297	410
Kerry Full Time Jobs Created	74	194
Kerry Full Time Jobs Lost	8	106
Kildare Full Time Jobs Created	176	534
Kildare Full Time Jobs Lost	489	244
Kilkenny Full Time Jobs Created	180	320
Kilkenny Full Time Jobs Lost	0	100
Laois Full Time Jobs Created	2	76
Laois Full Time Jobs Lost	23	138
Leitrim Full Time Jobs Created	1	54
Leitrim Full Time Jobs Lost	152	16
Limerick Full Time Jobs Created	400	684
Limerick Full Time Jobs Lost	99	453

Questions - Written Answers

-	IDA	EI
Longford Full Time Jobs Created	24	116
Longford Full Time Jobs Lost	0	88
Louth Full Time Jobs Created	386	299
Louth Full Time Jobs Lost	45	196
Mayo Full Time Jobs Created	126	197
Mayo Full Time Jobs Lost	58	270
Meath Full Time Jobs Created	68	615
Meath Full Time Jobs Lost	103	294
Monaghan Full Time Jobs Created	3	294
Monaghan Full Time Jobs Lost	10	142
Offaly Full Time Jobs Created	31	139
Offaly Full Time Jobs Lost	1	171

-	IDA	EI
Roscommon Full Time Jobs Created	53	29
Roscommon Full Time Jobs Lost	0	75
Sligo Full Time Jobs Created	149	247
Sligo Full Time Jobs Lost	138	71
Tipp North Full Time Jobs Created	0	49
Tipp North Full Time Jobs Lost	6	180
Tipp South Full Time Jobs Created	10	81
Tipp South Full Time Jobs Lost	155	117
Waterford Full Time Jobs Created	75	692
Waterford Full Time Jobs Lost	186	846
Westmeath Full Time Jobs Created	252	275
Westmeath Full Time Jobs Lost	30	104

-	IDA	EI
Wexford Full Time Jobs Created	111	385
Wexford Full Time Jobs Lost	106	297
Wicklow Full Time Jobs Created	60	410
Wicklow Full Time Jobs Lost	110	193

Foreign Direct Investment

104. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will detail the percentage of FDI investments in the Dublin and Cork and other regions. [7747/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I have been informed by IDA Ireland that 25% of all investments approved by the Agency in 2012 were in locations outside of Dublin and Cork, while 35% of all investments announced in 2012 were in locations outside of Dublin and Cork. However, some of the investments announced would have been approved in previous years. Details of IDA Ireland announcements for 2012 are set out in the tabular statement.

IDA Ireland - Announcement List of Investments in 2012 January-December 2012

NO.	DATE	COMPANY	LOCATION	ORIGIN	INVEST	JOBS	PROJECT ACTIVITY	CONTACT
1	05/01/12	Workday	Dublin	US	N/A	100	Expansion of EMEA offices	For more information: Workday Christine Cefalo, Workday Corporate Communications, +1 925 951 9260, Christine.Cefalo@Workday.com
2	05/01/12	Cook Ireland	Limerick	US	€16m	12	RD&I project	For more information: Cook Medical Linda Murphy, EU PR Coordinator Cook Medical, O'Halloran Road, National Technology Park, Limerick. Office: +35361250570, Mobile: +353872448531 Linda.Murphy@cookmedical.com
3	05/01/12	Cetra	Limerick	US	N/A	20	European Service Centre for translation services	For more information: CETRA Angela Wende Director of Marketing and Sales +1-215-635-7090 +1 215-690-9088 angela@cetra.com
4	09/01/12	Allergan	Mayo	US	N/A	200	200 jobs 250 construction	For more information: IDA Communications office: +353 1 6034226 idaireland@ida.ie
5	31/01/12	BSkyB	Dublin	UK	N/A	800	800 jobs for customer service centre	For more information: www.skycustomercentres.com
6	30/01/12	IERC	Cork	N/A	€1m	N/A	Research centre – signing of contracts with higher level institutions	For more information: IDA Communications office: +353 1 6034226 idaireland@ida.ie

Questions - Written Answers

NO.	DATE	COMPANY	LOCATION	ORIGIN	INVEST	JOBS	PROJECT ACTIVITY	CONTACT
7	08/02/12	Webroot	Dublin	US	N/A	N/A	Opening of new office	For more information: WebrootMacLean Guthrie, PR Director+1-720-842-3164mguthrie@webroot.com
8	09/02/12	HP	Galway/ Kildare	US	N/A	280	Announcement of 150 research development jobs and 130 new technical and support roles	For more information: HPAnna Doody, +353 (0) 87 050 8917Anna.doody@hp.com

Community Employment Schemes Places

105. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the additional community employment places for community childcare; and if she considers that the recent budget changes regarding lone parents are having an impact on this. [7602/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The 2,000 additional places for the Community Employment (CE) programme announced in Budget 2013 brings the overall number of CE places to 25,300, inclusive of supervisor posts. These places are being drawn down on a phased basis from the end of January to December, 2013. The additional places are critical to the continued improvement of CE, as outlined in the CE Financial Review of Schemes undertaken by this Department in 2012.

The allocation of places will be informed by the population of long-term unemployed persons in each area, the number of claimants on Jobseekers Allowance, One Parent Family Payment and people with a disability in receipt of welfare payments for 52 weeks or more.

Priority will be given to (a) schemes involved in community child care services, social and health care services and drug rehabilitation services that offer training and development opportunities and work experience to CE participants and (b) those schemes with a clear track record in the development and progression of participants towards employment.

An allocation of 500 of the additional places is reserved for child care support.

The Department recognises that there has been a decline in participation of lone parents on CE due to recent budgetary changes. Every effort is being made to encourage take-up of these places. The Department, in collaboration with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, are in the process of improving the provision of training and work experience for CE participants who wish to pursue a career in child care. This will enhance qualifications and progression for CE participants.

In addition, the Department is in the process of rolling out a revised referral process to address the future recruitment and selection of participants for CE schemes.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

106. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an application for an extension of a community employment scheme will be decided in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7517/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned has been a participant in the community employment scheme since 2nd August 2010, and was granted an extension in July 2012 to continue participating in the scheme until 19th July 2013. No request for a further extension for the person concerned has been received to date from the Project Sponsor. As per community employment procedures, extensions for participants are only considered by my Department at the request of the Project Sponsor.

Legislative Programme

107. **Deputy Tom Barry** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she plans to amend the Civil Registration Act 2012 to allow for the registration, in Ireland, of the deaths of Irish citizens abroad. [7518/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Under the provisions and procedures governing the registration of deaths in Ireland, which are contained in Part 5 of the Civil Registration Act, 2004, if a death occurs in the State it is the duty of a qualified informant (normally a relative of the deceased) to attend at a registrar's office and register the death on foot of a certificate of cause of death supplied by a registered medical practitioner. Where a death is referred to a coroner, the death is registered by a registrar on foot of a coroner's certificate.

In general, only deaths which occur within the State can be registered. However, Section 39 of the Act provides for the following exceptions:

The death of an Irish citizen on board a foreign ship or a foreign aircraft travelling to or from a port, or an airport, as the case may be, in the State;

The death of a person on board an Irish aircraft or an Irish ship;

The death of a member of the Garda Síochána or the Permanent Defence Force or of the spouse or specified members of the family of such a member outside the State while the member is serving outside the State as such member.

Usually, when an Irish citizen dies abroad, the death is registered by the civil authorities of the place where the death occurred, and a certified copy of the death registration is obtainable. This certificate, translated, if necessary, is normally sufficient for all legal and administrative purposes here and for these reasons alone there is no necessity for the death to be registered in the State.

Section 38 of the Act makes provision for the registration of a death of an Irish citizen domiciled in the State in certain specific circumstances. Where the death of an Irish citizen domiciled in the State occurs abroad, the death may be registered here if there was not at the time of the death a system of registration of deaths in the place where the death occurred, or such a system that applied to such a death, or it is not possible to obtain copies of or extracts from civil records of the death, i.e. a death certificate. In other words, if the death could not be registered or if a death certificate could not be obtained, the death can be registered here.

The number of Irish citizens who are domiciled in Ireland and who die abroad is relatively small in the context of total deaths occurring here in any given year. My understanding is that the vast majority of these people were travelling abroad for leisure or business purposes. I am aware that the Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection has recommended amending the current legislation in order to enable deaths of Irish citizens who have died abroad to be registered here.

Any broadening of the current provisions will require careful consideration. It will be appreciated that the number of people who live and die in other countries and who have or are entitled to have Irish citizenship is very large. This would have implications both for the registration process itself and for the vital statistics relating to deaths which are derived from registered events.

This issue is currently being considered in my Department along with a number of other proposed amendments to the Civil Registration Act (2004) and in this regard it is hoped that legislation will be introduced in 2013.

Question No. 108 withdrawn.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

109. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7528/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 16th January 2013, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

110. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for invalidity pension appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7529/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 16th January 2013, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Free Travel Scheme Eligibility

111. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will consider changing the qualifying criteria for free travel in respect of epilepsy patients who risk losing their jobs as a result of transportation difficulties as a result of their illness. [7595/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There are currently in excess of 745,000 customers eligible for free travel and when spousal and companion passes are taken

into account, there are over 1.1 million customers with some free travel eligibility. Expenditure on this scheme was frozen at 2010 levels by the previous Government. The available expenditure for the free travel scheme in 2013 is €77 million.

The free travel scheme is currently available to all people living in the State aged 66 years or over, to carers and to customers under 66 who are in receipt of certain disability type payments. The scheme permits customers to travel for free on most CIE public transport services, LUAS and a range of services offered by up to 90 private operators in various parts of the country.

Customers aged under 66 years must be in receipt of a qualifying payment from my Department in order to qualify for a free travel pass. I have no plans to change the current qualifying criteria for the scheme.

Given the increasing number of recipients and the funding pressures, my Department along with representatives from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the National Transport Authority are currently reviewing the free travel scheme. The work of this group is expected to conclude mid-2013.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

112. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will approve an increase in rent supplement in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7610/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The rent supplement claim for the person concerned has been re-assessed following a reduction in her primary payment. An Exceptional Needs Payment has issued to the client for all arrears owed and she has been provided with a copy of her new entitlement to rent supplement.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

113. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will approve an application for rent supplement in respect of person (details supplied in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7611/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The information provided by the person concerned was not sufficient to allow the Department to carry out an assessment in full on his rent supplement application. A detailed letter clearly defining the required information has been sent to the person concerned. A decision can be made on his claim when the necessary information has been provided.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

114. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an application for rent supplement in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7614/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned has made an application for rent supplement and has been requested to provide further information in order to process his claim in full. A decision will be made on his application when the information

has been provided.

Disability Allowance Payments

115. **Deputy Eamonn Maloney** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will outline the calculation process which is used and the steps taken to determine the amount of weekly diet supplement for persons on gluten free diets who are in receipt of disability allowance and invalidity pension; if she will provide examples for both categories; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7617/13]

134. **Deputy Eamonn Maloney** asked the Minister for Social Protection the calculation process which is used and the steps taken, to determine the amount of weekly diet supplement for persons on gluten free diets who are in receipt of disability allowance and invalidity pension including examples for both categories; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7700/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 115 and 134 together.

Under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme, a diet supplement may be paid to a person who is receiving a social welfare or health service executive payment where a special diet is prescribed as a result of a specified medical condition and they satisfy a means test.

The amount of diet supplement payable in individual cases is calculated by assessing one-third (single people) or one-sixth (couples joint weekly means) of the applicant's weekly income, excluding any amounts of benefit or assistance payable in respect of any child dependants against the cost of the relevant diet. The current costing applied to a gluten free diet is €68.43 per week for adults and €6.50 per week for children.

The last study into the cost of specialised diets was carried out in 2007. Accordingly when diet supplement payments for qualifying individuals are being calculated the social welfare rates for 2007 are used.

For example, a single person under age 65 on maximum rate invalidity benefit would receive a weekly payment of €4.66. This is calculated using the invalidity benefit rate of 2007 (€191.30) divided by three (€63.77) which is subtracted from the cost of the gluten free diet (€68.43).

A single person on maximum rate of disability allowance would receive €6.50 per week. This is calculated using the disability allowance rate of 2007 (€185.80) divided by three (€61.93) which is subtracted from the cost of the gluten free diet (€68.43).

The Department is currently undertaking a review of the diet supplement scheme. *Question No. 116 withdrawn.*

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

117. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a domiciliary care allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7634/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary

care allowance (DCA) was received on the 28th July 2011. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who found that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. A letter issued on the 5th October 2011 refusing the allowance. The person concerned subsequently lodged an appeal against this decision and he was informed by the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 11th May 2012 that the appeal had been disallowed.

The decision/appeal process for this application is now complete. If the person concerned has additional information which was not made available to the deciding and appeals officers when they made their decisions, it is open to him to re-apply for the payment.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

118. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a domiciliary care allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [7639/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 13th November 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Payments Waiting Times

119. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide the number of households in receipt of more than €1,000 weekly in social welfare payments; the number of households in receipt of between €750 and €1,000; the number of households in receipt of between €500 and €750; the number of households in receipt of between €250 and €500; and the number of households in receipt of less than €250, excluding child benefit. [7649/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department delivers a wide range of payments at weekly, monthly, annual and other intervals across a range of claim processing systems which support the delivery of entitlements to people under individual social welfare schemes. In light of this, it is not possible to extract data in respect of total social welfare payments issued to individuals in the State. In relation to payments at family or household level, unless the social welfare status of other family members, such as siblings or parents, is directly relevant to the particular social welfare claim being made by an individual, details of social welfare payments made to other family members are not associated with their claim. For that reason, the information sought in relation to the level of payments made to families is not available.

While the average payment varies across the various schemes operated by the Department, the most typical rate paid to people of working age is €188 per week, while the most typical rate paid to people aged 66 years or more is €230.30 per week. In addition to their primary weekly payment, some people may also receive secondary benefits, such as Rent Supplement or Fuel

Allowance if they also satisfy the conditions for receipt of those payments. The most typical rate of Rent Supplement is €100 per week, while Fuel Allowance is €20 per week from October to April.

The accompanying tabular statement sets out the average weekly value of the most common social welfare payments in 2012.

Table: Average values for weekly social welfare payments, Annual Average

Provisional Outturn in 2012

Scheme	Average value (€weekly)
State Pension (Contributory)	243.47
State Pension (Transition)	241.01
Widow(er)s Contributory Pension	227.64
Invalidity Pension	228.01
One Parent Family Payment	224.06
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	212.49
Illness Benefit	206.71
Jobseeker's Allowance	201.06
Disability Allowance	202.98
Carer's Allowance	188.55
Jobseeker's Benefit	176.23

Note: The data presented is scheme specific and does not take into account the fact that some individual recipients may be in receipt of more than one personal rate of a primary payment e.g. State Pension Contributory and a Half-Rate Carer's Allowance (over 40% of all Carer's Allowance recipients receive more than one primary personal payment per week). The weekly averages include arrears and increases/allowances other than fuel allowance.

Death Certificates Issues

120. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will give an update on the issue of death certificates for the Stardust fire families. [7657/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An tArd Chláraitheoir (Registrar General) is the person with statutory responsibility for the registration of deaths, I have made enquiries with him and I am informed that the position is as follows:

There were five male victims of the Stardust tragedy whose bodies could not, unfortunately, be identified at the time. However these five deaths were registered in 2007, on foot of Coroner's certificates, following the exhumation of the bodies and DNA test analysis.

The Registrar General is not aware of any other victims whose deaths remain to be registered. Death certificates for any of the five victims can be obtained, in the normal way, from any civil registration office, from the General Register Office, or online at www.certificates.ie.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

121. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an invalidity pension appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she

will make a statement on the matter. [7666/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 17th January 2013, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

122. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal for invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7671/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in this case on 18th February 2013. The person concerned has been notified of the arrangements for the hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Pension Provisions

123. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a pre-retirement pension ceased in April 2012 in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7674/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was in receipt of Pre-Retirement Allowance (PRETA) and her payment inadvertently stopped in April 2011. She was issued a yearly review form in order to establish if there was any change in her circumstances and she returned the form, as requested, in March 2011. However, due to a clerical error, it was not updated on her computer record and as a result her payment stopped on 5 April 2011.

No further contact was received from her until 23 January 2013 when a phone call was received to clarify the reason why her entitlement to PRETA had ceased.

As a result of the phone enquiry, a Social Welfare Inspector made a home visit to the customer. In order to determine her entitlement to PRETA, she was requested to furnish a number of documents. To date, the documents have not yet been received. When the documents are provided, the Inspector will complete a report and the file will be returned to the Local Office where a deciding officer will issue a determination.

Consideration will be given to restoring her payment back to April 2011 based on the information she has been asked to supply to the Social Welfare Inspector.

Jobseeker's Allowance Payments

124. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason jobseeker's allowance was withdrawn without prior notification in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7676/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance up to 1st January, 2013 at the weekly rate of €203.00. His entitlement was reviewed and he was requested by the Social Welfare Inspector to furnish documentation in support of his continuing entitlement. As he failed to furnish documentation, his payment was suspended.

He will need to provide the outstanding information in order to have his payment re-instated.

Social Insurance Payments

125. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a reduction in a PRSI contribution in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7677/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Income received by participants of certain FAS courses including Community Employment is treated, for the purposes of charging PRSI, in the same manner as earnings from employment. This means that participants of such FAS courses can gain entitlement to social insurance benefits, including short-term benefits such as Jobseekers and Illness Benefit, in the same way as private sector employees.

As part of Budget 2013, the €127 PRSI-free allowance which applies to employees paying PRSI Classes A, E and H, was abolished. For those earning in excess of €352 per week and paying PRSI at 4%, this increases the amount of PRSI payable by €5.08 per week. This also affects participants of certain FAS courses whose income is treated as earnings for PRSI purposes, in the same manner as it impacts the earnings of employees.

There is no provision for reduction of the PRSI liability on earnings, or income which is treated in an analogous way, on hardship grounds.

Invalidity Pension Applications

126. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7678/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Invalidity pension is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the contribution conditions.

This department received a claim for invalidity pension for the person concerned on 26 October 2012. The medical evidence provided by the claimant in support of his claim was examined by a medical assessor who was of the opinion that the person concerned is not eligible for invalidity pension as he does not satisfy the medical criteria. The application for invalidity pension was disallowed by a deciding officer. The person in question was notified of this decision and the reason for it on 28 January 2013.

Disability Allowance Appeals

127. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a disability allowance appeal which was submitted in early November in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7679/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 07th February 2013, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Disability Allowance Payments

128. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a disability allowance has been reduced from €100 to €35.30 in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7680/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following a review of the person's disability allowance claim, it was found that his weekly means had increased since his last means assessment.

The person concerned was assessed with earnings from his spouse's employment. When this means was assessed he was entitled to a reduced rate of disability allowance and he was notified of this decision in writing on 29 January 2013.

If the person's circumstances have changed, it is open to him to submit any further relevant information and the decision will be reviewed.

Labour Court Recommendations

129. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the steps she has taken to uphold the July 2008 Labour decision with regard to pensions for community employment scheme supervisors should be adequately funded by FÁS as the recognised funding agency; the timeline for the implementation of the decision in relation to the implementation of the courts order; the funding levels involved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7681/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Labour Court recommended in July 2008 that an agreed pension scheme should be introduced for community employment (CE) scheme supervisors and assistant supervisors, and that such a scheme should be adequately funded by FÁS. This matter has been the subject of discussions between this Department, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the unions representing CE supervisors. Implementation of the claim is not considered sustainable in light of the current and on-going fiscal environment and the requirement to contain and reduce public expenditure. The costs of the introduction of such a scheme are likely to be of the order of €3m per annum with retrospective costs of the order of at least €30m.

The Deputy should also note that FÁS and subsequently this Department is not the em-

ployer of CE supervisors and such employees are not public servants. Neither was FÁS a party to the Labour Court dispute on this matter. The responsibilities of the sponsoring organisations and the individuals concerned must be recognised when considering such pension provision arrangements.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

130. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will confirm that the State pension transition at age 65 years is being abolished with effect from 1 January 2014; if she will outline her plans to provide for persons facing compulsory retirement at age 65 years after that date, in view of the fact that the State pension will not be paid until persons reach the age of 66 years; the criteria for her plans; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7682/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The State pension (transition) (SPT) is paid for a maximum of 12 months and is available to people who retire from work on reaching age 65 provided they satisfy the necessary PRSI contributions.

The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 provides for changes to State pension provision. SPT will cease to be paid from 2014 which will standardise the payment of pension at age 66. In addition, the age at which State pension (contributory) (SPC) will be payable will increase to 67 years from 2012 and to 68 years from 2028.

The abolition of SPT removes the retirement condition which acts as an incentive to leave the workforce and has been widely criticised as a barrier to older people remaining in employment. There is no retirement condition attached to the SPC.

In December 2012, there were just under 14,400 SPT recipients and 312,300 recipients of SPC. Only 1,700 people, or 12% in all, were awarded SPT directly from employment while almost half were already in receipt of another social welfare payment.

Currently, a person who retires from work on reaching age 65 and who does not have sufficient PRSI contributions to qualify for SPT may apply for another social welfare payment, depending on their individual circumstances. With regard to employment, arrangements for retirement from work are usually the subject of contractual arrangements between the employer and the employee and, as such, are outside my remit.

The State pension is the bedrock of the Irish pension system. These reforms are essential to ensure its sustainability and to address the challenges of changing demographics such as increasing life expectancy. There are no plans to change the date of implementation.

Question No. 131 withdrawn.

Social Welfare Appeals Delays

132. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on whether any progress has been made in reducing the processing times for social welfare appeals; the current processing time for appeals; her views on whether it is appropriate that applicants are currently waiting up to eight months for a decision with the appeals office in view of the fact that they are also waiting a considerable time from the initial date of their application; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7686/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There was a rapid and sustained increase in the number of appeals from 2009 to date which has placed extraordinary pressure on the SWAO. Significant resources and efforts have been put into reducing backlogs and improving processing times for appellants, including the assignment of 15 additional Appeals Officers, improving business processes and implementing a new operating model.

There has been significant increase in the number of appeals finalised from 17,787 in 2009 to 32,558 in 2012. Processing times have been reduced by 10.3 weeks overall in 2012 with respect to 2011, with time for an oral hearing time down by 13 weeks and the time for summary decision up by 2.7 weeks. Of course, further improvement is needed. In that regard, the Chief Appeals Officer expects to finalise 6,000 more cases in 2013 than in 2012; there is a major programme of process redesign and modernisation currently underway in relation to many scheme areas which will reduce backlogs and will also reduce the time taken for the Department to respond to requests from the SWAO for submissions in relation to appeals; it is planned to recruit additional Medical Assessors in 2013 which will assist in reducing the time taken for appeals where a medical assessment is required. All these measures together will reduce the waiting time for appellants.

Departmental Offices

133. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection his plans to redevelop the social protection office, Kilbarrack, Dublin 5; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7688/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Kilbarrack local office is one of a number of the Department's offices that are currently being surveyed with a view to introducing the Intreo model of service delivery in the future. In the meantime, work is underway to introduce a greater range of services at the office, including the Public Service Card registration.

Question No. 134 answered with Question No. 115.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

135. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social Protection to explain if Garda clearance is needed for all new recruits to community employment schemes or just for those working in certain sectors; if clearance is required for existing participants on all schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7707/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Garda vetting **only** applies to Employment Programme applicants including Community Employment who may come into contact with children and/or vulnerable adults while working on a scheme. The definition of a "child" is a person under the age of 18 years, as per the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012.

The Act's definition of a "vulnerable person" means a person, other than a child, who - (a) is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia, (b) has an intellectual disability, (c) is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age, or (d) has a physical disability, which is of such a nature or degree— (i) as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or (ii) that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.

The types of occupations covered include those working directly with vulnerable people such as childcare, care of the elderly or for people with disabilities and indirectly, where access is possible through the place of work, for example caretaking in community halls, sports coaching, bus driving, grounds-keeping etc. Garda vetting, once complete is deemed relevant for: the programme/project originally applied for; and the duration of participation on the programme/project or for three years, whichever is the shorter. If an existing Garda-vetted participant has reached three years continuous participation, they will be subject to Garda vetting again.

Pension Provisions

136. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 437 of 29 January 2013, when the community employment programme which was transferred to her Department in October 2010 from FÁS and the provision in the FÁS accounts of €3.75 million for supervisor pensions was reversed, while accepting no cash was transacted up to that point, the reason it was decided that no amount would be included in or be provided for in the expenditure for her Department to deal with this matter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7716/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform have informed FÁS and subsequently this Department that any provision for pensions for Community Employment (CE) supervisors would have to be financed from the existing financial resource allocation. Additional funding will not be available to cover this item. That has left the Department in the position that it would have to cut CE participant numbers substantially to fund the CE supervisor pensions, which is not a viable option. As previously stated, the Department works on a cash accounting basis, so no provision has been made in the current CE budget for supervisor pensions since the transfer of responsibilities.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Eligibility

137. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection with regard to the clothing grant that was available to families in need and on low incomes to help with the cost of holy communion and confirmation days, if this grant is still available to parents; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7753/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off, exceptional and unforeseen expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income. There is no automatic entitlement to a payment. ENPs are payable at the discretion of the officers administering the scheme taking into account the requirements of the legislation and all the relevant circumstances of the case in order to ensure that the payments target those most in need of assistance. The Government has provided over €47 million for the scheme in 2013.

A review of the guidelines on exceptional needs payments was carried out by the Department by a working group made up of former community welfare service staff. One of the recommendations emanating from this review is to address the different approaches taken, in different areas, in relation to the payment of exceptional needs payments in respect of religious ceremonies, mainly Communion and Confirmations, and to ensure that the SWA scheme is responding to financial need and not occasion.

For 2013, the Department has recommended that payment of the allowance specifically in respect of religious ceremonies will cease. Applications can continue to be made under the scheme for assistance with child clothing. This measure will ensure that the ENP scheme will continue to respond to specific need and not to the occasion.

This recommendation does not affect the discretion available to officers administering the scheme in issuing an ENP to assist an individual or household in any particular hardship situation which may arise. Persons who consider that they have an entitlement to an ENP under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme should contact the local officials administering the scheme.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Applications

138. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the position regarding an application for the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Leitrim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7675/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme was received by my Department from the individual referred to in the Deputy's Question.

The application was returned to the applicant as it was incomplete. It has since been returned to my Department and is being assessed. My officials will be in contact with the applicant in the coming weeks about the status of the application.

Departmental Properties

139. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 171 of 28 March 2012 if he will detail in tabular form, the number of leases, location and the number of leases with upward only rent clauses for each year since 2010 in which his Department is the lessor. [7704/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Since the establishment of my Department on 2 June 2011, no lease arrangements are in place where my Department has acted as the landlord.

Telecommunications Services Provision

140. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will comment on the principle of universality of utility services and the precedent that line rental charges would be the same for all homes, that no differentiation between the price of line rental is made between urban and rural; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7637/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Line rental charges form part of the universal service obligation (USO) in the telecommunications market. The purpose of this USO is to ensure that all citizens can access basic telecommunications services at fixed locations at reasonable prices. The USO in the telecommunications market is provided for in both EU legislative acts, Directive 2002/22/EC of the European

Parliament, as amended by Directive 2009/136/EC and national legislation, the European Communities (Electronic Communications Networks and Services) (Universal Service and User's Rights) Regulations 2011 – S.I. No.337 of 2011.

The current USO requires that at least one service provider is designated to provide telecommunications access at fixed locations, access to telephone directories, reasonable access to payphones and specific measures for people with disabilities all at reasonable access prices by regulating connection fees and line rental charges.

The national legislation authorises the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) to designate one or more service providers to perform the USO.

In June 2012 ComReg extended until June 2014, a universal service obligation addressed to Eircom, which among other things, requires that line rental for basic fixed line telephone services is available to end users at a standard price across the country. There is therefore no line rental price differentiation between urban and rural areas and nor is there is any proposal to amend this obligation at this time.

Semi-State Bodies Remuneration

141. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of people that are on State pensions who have worked in semi-State companies under his Department and are in pension brackets/bands of between €50,000 and €60,000, between €60,000 and €70,000, between €70,000 and €80,000, between €80,000 and €90,000, between €90,000 and €100,000 and more than €100,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7667/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Information relating to individual pension details in respect of bodies and agencies under the aegis of my Department is a day-to-day matter for those organisations. My Department does not have the information sought by the Deputy. I will ask the relevant agencies and bodies under the aegis of my Department to respond directly to the Deputy in the matter.

Telecommunications Services Provision

142. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will make contact with Eircom to raise concerns about the current proposal to drop the price of telephone lines by €4 per month to customers in cities and towns as part of their broadband rural plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7706/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Eircom is a private company. I have no legal basis to seek to influence its commercial decisions on pricing. Eircom is the designated provider of universal services in the telecommunications market. In June 2012, the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) extended until June 2014, the universal service obligation addressed to Eircom which, among other things, requires that line rental for basic fixed line telephone services is available to end users at a standard price across the country. There are no proposals to amend this obligation. Separately, ComReg published a decision (ref. no., 13/14) on its website last week, which allows Eircom greater flexibility in setting wholesale rates for bundled services offered to its competitors at telephone exchanges where there is already active competition among service providers and/or exchanges where next generation access services are available. The retail price for basic

fixed line telephone services is not altered as a consequence of the decision and remains at a standard price across the country in line with Eircom's universal service obligation. This was an independent decision on bundled service which was reached by ComReg in accordance with its mandate. I had no statutory function in the process.

Unfinished Housing Developments

143. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason a housing estate (details supplied) in County Westmeath was categorised by his Department as finished when Westmeath County Council clearly outlined in the list they submitted that this estate was in fact unfinished; if he will guarantee that this mistake will be rectified and place the estate on the unfinished housing estate list as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7589/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): As part of the process of preparing the 2011 National Housing Development Survey, which was launched by my Department in October 2011, local authorities, including Westmeath County Council, provided details of all unfinished housing developments in their areas. Unfinished housing developments were divided into four categories: Category 1, where the development is still being actively completed by the developer, or where no serious public safety issues exist; Category 2, where a receiver has been appointed; Category 3, where a receiver has not been appointed and the developer is still in place but effectively inactive; and Category 4, where the development has been effectively abandoned and is posing serious problems for residents. This categorisation formed the basis for the list of those unfinished developments eligible for a waiver on the annual household charge. Only households in developments in categories 3 and 4 are eligible for the waiver from payment of the household charge. The list of developments in which households are eligible for the waiver in 2012 is set out under the Local Government (Household Charge) Regulations 2012. In Budget 2013, the Government announced the introduction of a local property tax which will replace the annual household charge. It was also decided that a waiver will apply in certain circumstances. A prescribed list of unfinished estates, subject to certain criteria and identified as part of the National Housing Development Survey 2012, in respect of which the property tax for 2013 will be waived in accordance with the Finance (Local Property Tax) Bill 2012, will be prepared. I anticipate that this list will be published shortly.

Pyrite Panel Report Implementation

144. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views that it is acceptable to create a category of homes that does not comply with the building regulations for which he is responsible because they contain infill material that is unfit for purpose. [7625/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The independent Pyrite Panel recommended a categorisation system as a means of prioritising pyrite remediation works. Recognising the expensive and intrusive nature of pyrite remediation work and the unpredictability of pyritic heave, I consider that the Panel developed a reasonable and pragmatic approach to facilitate the remediation of dwellings exhibiting significant pyritic damage. The recently published standard by the National Standards Authority of Ireland, I.S 398 — Reactive pyrite in sub-floor hardcore material – Part 1 provides accurate and reliable protocols to determine whether a building is or may be affected by reactive pyrite

in the sub-floor hardcore material and gives clear guidance on the process and procedures to be followed to determine if a dwelling should be remediated.

Parking Regulations

145. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if new national guidance on car parking and smart travel will be provided to local authorities in order to ensure that shoppers have adequate access to car parking in town centres and that parking is not too expensive for shoppers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7640/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The integration of local transport is a key feature of national, regional and local development planning and is further strengthened through the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010. This provides for greater consistency of plans at regional, city/county and local level, including through the requirement for a core strategy to be incorporated into development plans to reinforce the practice of including evidence-based policy objectives in future development plans. These new provisions are being reflected and implemented in new development plans and in variations to existing plans, and planning authorities are ensuring that local area plans are consistent with the development plan thereafter. I am further strengthening transport planning in local development planning by a more formalised process of integration through the statutory planning guidelines for planning authorities. In this context, the forthcoming Guidelines to Planning Authorities on Local Area Plans, which I expect to publish shortly outline, will encourage, among the key policies and objectives for inclusion in local area plans, smarter travel patterns through more compact, less sprawling, and better structured urban areas. They will also promote more sustainable and healthier travel habits such as walking, cycling, and the use of public transport.

I will, in addition, provide an update of the Development Plan Guidelines during the coming year, *inter alia*, further to strengthen the integration of transport planning and forward planning.

Fire Service Issues

146. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has reached a decision on whether or not to recommend to the Department of Social Protection that retained fire-fighters should be entitled to social welfare if they have no other form of employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7702/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Questions of entitlement to social welfare are a matter for the Minister for Social Protection and I have no function or role in making recommendations in that regard. My Department was contacted by the Department of Social Protection seeking information on the retained fire service and has provided information on the fire service in general. Retained fire-fighters are employees of local authorities and the Department of Social Protection may make direct contact with local authorities if, in accordance with their statutory remit, they are seeking specific information.

Climate Change Policy

147. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if it will contain clearly defined targets for 2020 and 2050 to provide certainty in relation to his policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7757/13]

148. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government with regard to the climate Bill if it contains five-year carbon budgets that provide a clear pathway for emissions reductions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7758/13]

149. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government with regard to the climate Bill, if it will contain an independent expert committee to advise the Government on climate change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7759/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to answer Questions Nos. 147 to 149, inclusive, together.

I refer to the reply to Question No. 132 of 5 February 2013. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the outline Heads of the Bill in advance of their release.

Building Regulations Amendments

150. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 698 of 6 November 2012 if he will provide a further update in relation to this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7761/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Following a comprehensive public consultation process undertaken in 2012, I am finalising the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2013 for signature into law. The new regulations will provide, among other things, for the introduction of mandatory certificates of compliance by builders and designers of buildings confirming that the statutory requirements of the Building Regulations have been met in relation to the building concerned. In addition a building owner will be required to assign a registered professional to inspect the work during construction and also to certify that the completed building is in compliance with the requirements of the Building Regulations.

The roles of lead designer and assigned certifier may only be undertaken by competent persons who are included on the registers of Architects or Building Surveyors as provided for under the Building Control Act 2007 or who are Chartered Engineers. Depending on their own personal circumstances, it may be open to members of the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT) to seek inclusion on one or other of the registers of Architects or Building Surveyors. My Department has had discussions and correspondence with the executive of CIAT in relation to this matter and is happy to continue such engagement as required. In the meantime, I would encourage members of CIAT interested in signing the statutory certificates of compliance that will be introduced under the forthcoming Building Control Regulations to explore and pursue the routes to registration which may be open to them under the Building Control Act 2007 having regard to their own professional background.

Garda Investigations

151. **Deputy Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there is a Garda Síochána investigation ongoing into systemic weight to volume fraud at Coillte Teo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7603/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have requested a report from the Garda authorities on the matters raised by the Deputy. I will contact the Deputy directly when the report is to hand.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission Issues

152. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps the Garda is taking in an area (details supplied) in County Meath to reduce crime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7607/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the area referred to is in the Duleek Garda Sub-District which is under the control of the District Officer, Ashbourne.

I am further informed that the area is subject to regular patrols by local uniformed personnel, augmented by patrols from Regular Units and Detective Units from the District Headquarters of Ashbourne, together with the Divisional Traffic Unit and Regional Support Unit as required. Community support is maintained through interaction with local Community Gardaí and Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes.

Local Garda management closely monitors such patrols, and other operational strategies in place, in conjunction with crime trends and policing needs of the communities in these areas to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources to provide the best possible Garda service to the public. While the situation is being kept under review, Garda management is satisfied that a full and comprehensive policing service is being delivered to the communities in the areas concerned and that the current structures in place deliver an effective and efficient policing service.

The Deputy will be aware that the Garda Commissioner has put Operation Fiacla in place in order to address incidents of burglary, aggravated burglaries and related offences throughout the country. Operation Fiacla is intelligence driven and specific burglary initiatives have been implemented in each Garda Region to target suspect offenders. I am informed that as of 31 January 2013, 3,903 persons have been arrested and 2,142 persons have been charged with burglary offences under Operation Fiacla.

An Garda Síochána also places great emphasis on the importance of community partnerships such as Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch, in preventing and detecting crime, and maintaining a safe environment for everyone. Gardaí continue to invest time and energy in these partnerships and relationships to the benefit of all.

Child Custody and Access

153. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will outline current legislation regarding the right of unmarried fathers to have access to their children; and the changes expected to this in view of the recent Children’s referendum. [7615/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Under section 11 of the Guardianship of Infants Act 1964, an unmarried father of a child, whether or not he is a guardian of the child, may apply to the court for an order giving directions on any question affecting the

welfare of the child including the question of access to the child. In making such orders the court has to regard the welfare of the child as the first and paramount consideration. Where appropriate and practicable, the Court in making any order takes into account the child's wishes in the matter having regard to the age and understanding of the child. In considering whether to make an order under section 11, the court, further to section 11D (as inserted in the Act of 1964 by the Children Act 1997) must have regard to whether the child's best interests would be served by maintaining personal relations and direct contact with both his or her father and mother on a regular basis.

The Act of 1964 (again by way of amendments in the Children Act 1997) encourages parties to a dispute in relation to a child to agree on the custody or guardianship of or access to a child. Prior to institution of proceedings the legal representatives of the parties must discuss with them the possibility of agreement. The Court may adjourn any proceedings to assist agreement between the parties.

I am presently engaged in the preparation of a Family Relationships and Children Bill. In this regard the existing provisions on guardianship, custody and access are being examined in order to ensure they are fully compliant with the new provisions in Article 42A.4 of the Constitution on the paramountcy of the best interests of the child and the child's right to have his or her views ascertained and given due weight in all proceedings.

Immigration Policy

154. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will detail the number of applications under the immigrant investor bond and the start-up entrepreneur programme since the programmes were opened to application; the number of pending applications; the number of successful applications; and the value of investments made under each programme. [7636/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Since the launch of the Immigrant Investor Programme and the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme in April 2012, the Evaluation Committee have examined nineteen applications under the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme and five applications under the Immigrant Investor Programme. Approval has been given to eleven applications under the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme and three applications under the Immigrant Investor Programme. The Committee has requested further information from two applicants under the Immigrant Investor Programme. The fourteen proposals which have been approved during 2012 represent an investment commitment in Ireland of over €10.4 million and are projected to protect over 80 existing jobs and create 190 jobs in new enterprises over the next 3 years.

My officials inform me that since the last Evaluation Committee meeting in November 2013, one further application has been received under the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme and four applications have been received under the Immigrant Investor Programme.

Garda Stations Closures

155. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for the closure of Templemore and Roscrea Garda stations, County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7642/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Commissioner's Policing

Plan for 2013 sets out details for the closure of 100 Garda stations throughout the country. 95 of these stations were closed on the 31st January 2013 and the remaining 5 will be closed in the coming months. Neither Templemore nor Roscrea Garda Stations are listed for closure in 2013.

While the Policing plans for 2014 and 2015 have not yet been prepared, I understand, from discussions with the Garda Commissioner, that the current consolidation process will be largely completed by the end of this year and it seems unlikely at this point in time that there will be any further station closures in 2014 and 2015.

Gambling Legislation

156. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to bring forward a gambling control Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7690/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will recall my announcement in September 2011 that the Government had approved my proposals for new legislation on the regulation of gambling. The new legislation will give priority to the protection of consumers, especially the more vulnerable.

Work on the preparation of the Heads of a new Bill is nearing completion in my Department. I hope to be able to bring the Heads to Government shortly for its approval and agreement to proceed to formal drafting.

It is my intention to make the Heads of the Bill available on my Department's website once they have been approved by the Government.

Road Safety Issues

157. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of road checkpoints undertaken by an Garda Síochána for the years 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7691/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that it is not possible to provide a figure for the overall number of roadside checkpoints carried out by Gardaí. Gardaí who are on duty would frequently have occasion to engage and interact with various road users and such interactions may not necessitate further action or be recorded.

All members of An Garda Síochána are tasked with the enforcement of relevant legislation, including the Road Traffic and Road Transport Acts and this policy will continue. As part of this enforcement policy members of An Garda Síochána carry out planned, unplanned and 'ad hoc' checkpoints as required.

Insofar as mandatory alcohol checkpoints ('MAT' Checkpoints) are concerned the number of checkpoints for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012 are as follows:

Year	MAT Checkpoints
2010	56,532
2011	69,996
2012	71,073

Information provided by An Garda Síochána is as at 8 January, 2013 and is provisional, operational and subject to change.

An Garda Síochána continually conducts awareness campaigns and enforcement initiatives to reduce road fatalities and serious injuries on Irish roads, to increase driver awareness, to prevent and detect breaches of Road Traffic and Transport legislation and to promote an improved compliance culture amongst the road users through the comprehensive enforcement of all facets of Road Traffic legislation.

Garda Transport Data

158. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total number of marked and unmarked Garda Traffic Corps cars and motorbikes that were taken out of service in the Dublin region for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012; the number that were replaced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7692/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Decisions in relation to the provision and deployment of Garda transport are matters for the Garda Commissioner. Such decisions are made on the basis of ongoing analysis of An Garda Síochána's operational requirements.

I have been advised by the Garda authorities that the information requested by the Deputy in respect of the Garda Traffic Corps for the Dublin Metropolitan Region is provided in the following tables:

VEHICLES ALLOCATED

	CARS		MOTOR CYCLES	TOTAL
	MARKED	UNMARKED		
2010	0	1	0	1
2011	3	1	0	4
2012	1	0	5	6
Total	4	2	5	11

VEHICLES DECOMMISSIONED

	CARS		MOTOR CYCLES	TOTAL
	MARKED	UNMARKED		
2010	0	0	1	1
2011	0	0	2	2
2012	1	1	3	5
Total	1	1	6	8

As the Deputy will be aware, I made an additional €3 million available to An Garda Síochána towards the end of last year which enabled the Force to procure a total of 213 vehicles

in 2012. In addition, a further allocation of €5 million has been provided for the purchase and fit-out of Garda transport in 2013. This represents a very considerable financial investment in Garda transport, particularly at a time when the level of funding available across the public sector is severely limited. It is a clear indication of my commitment to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, An Garda Síochána are provided with sufficient resources to enable them to provide an effective and efficient policing service.

Firearms Licences

159. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for a gun dealer's licence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7715/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can confirm that an application has been received by my Department and will be processed in the near future.

Garda Oversight

160. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce an independent police authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7754/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The perceived advantage of a separate authority is that it interposes an additional layer of independent accountability between the political process and the management of An Garda Síochána. Where there is a single national police force, the case for the setting up of a policing authority to act as a link between democratic institutions and the day to day responsibility for operational policing loses much of its force. This additional layer would very seriously dilute democratic accountability and political responsibility, as well as the performance and effectiveness of An Garda Síochána itself. The relationship between the Garda Commissioner, the Government and the Houses of the Oireachtas has developed over time. The accountability of An Garda Síochána to the House, both directly and through the Minister for Justice and Equality, has been strengthened by the Garda Síochána Act 2005.

The separate roles of both the Minister and the Garda Commissioner in relation to an Garda Síochána are provided for under the provisions of the 2005 Act. The Act also made the Commissioner the Accounting Officer for the Force, and liable to appear before the Committee of Public Accounts in that capacity. In addition, the 2005 Act established the Garda Ombudsman Commission, which is empowered to carry out independent investigations into Garda conduct, as well as the Garda Inspectorate, which provides expert advice on achieving the highest levels of efficiency and effectiveness in the operation and administration of the Force. The accountability of the Garda Síochána has, through these measures, been significantly strengthened.

Another critical point overlooked by those who advocate a separate authority is that An Garda Síochána is not only the police service in this jurisdiction, it is the security service and border control authority of the State. To pass control of such matters to an unelected body beyond the executive and the legislature is untenable. It is more appropriate that An Garda Síochána should be accountable to the Government and to the Oireachtas - which are fully representative of, and dependent upon the support of the sovereign authority of the Irish people.

I have no plans to introduce a Garda Authority and there is no such commitment in the Pro-

gramme for Government.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Eligibility

161. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an agri-environment options scheme 2 application will be reviewed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7476/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from the 1st September 2011 and full payment totalling €338.07 issued in respect of 2011.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. Payments in respect of the 2012 Scheme year are subject to a similar administrative checking process which includes verification of capital investment actions through checks on receipts submitted. During this checking process it was found that two of the actions selected by the person named were not delivered in accordance with the scheme requirements and terms of the approval for participation in the scheme. As a result of this the minimum requirements set out in the scheme Terms and Conditions have not been met. A letter will shortly issue to the person named informing him that he is ineligible for the scheme and notifying him of his right to appeal.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

162. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a 2012 REP scheme four payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7520/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in June 2008 and received payments for the first 4 years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. The process is nearing completion in this case and I expect payment to issue shortly.

Single Payment Scheme Eligibility

163. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if additional entitlements will be provided to a new entrant into farming (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7522/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The National Reserve Scheme caters for new entrants to farming. In order to qualify for entitlements from the National Reserve applicants must have a herd number or have applied to their local District Veterinary office for a herd number prior to closing date of the Single payment application. In addition applicants must have submitted an application under the current Single payment scheme providing details of the number of eligible hectares farmed. Applicants are required to

meet certain criteria, which varies through the scheme years, with regard to income limits and educational qualifications. Under the 2012 National Reserve applicant's must have commenced farming after 17th May, 2010. Any off-farm income cannot exceed €30,000 and total income, including farm income, cannot exceed €40,000. Applicants must have obtained a FETAC Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Agriculture or its equivalent. The green certificate in farming is regarded as equivalent for this purpose. The closing date for receipt of applications was 15th May, 2012. There is no record of an application having been received from the person named.

There has been a National Reserve Scheme since the introduction of the new CAP regime in 2005. Should there be a 2013 National Reserve scheme it will be announced in March as has been the case for the previous Schemes. Should the person named wish to apply application forms will be available on the Departments website www.agriculture.ie following the introduction of this scheme.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

164. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary received a reduced payment under REP scheme 4; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7524/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payment under agri-environment schemes are made to compensate for income forgone and additional costs incurred by the scheme participants based on the type of commitments undertaken. In addition, an additional payment of up to 20% may be paid, where justified, based on "transaction costs" which are the costs incurred by participants in engaging with the scheme. Traditionally, this additional payment has been paid under REPS.

Given the on-going difficulties in the public finances and budgetary constraints on my Department, I have had no option but to make difficult decisions in the allocation of the funding available to many competing demands. In finalising my Department's Estimates for 2012, I announced a 10% reduction in payments under REPS 4 from 2012 onwards. I decided that the reduction would be implemented by way of a cut to the transaction cost of participating farmers of from €28.03 to €5.60 on each hectare on which the a transaction cost was paid.

The 2012 payment of the person named was adjusted accordingly. This resulted in a 2012 REPS 4 payment totalling €5,211.52, which issued to the person named in January 2013. Because of the particular circumstances of the person named, this represents a 7.9% reduction when compared to the 2011 payment which totalled €5,660.12.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

165. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment for REP scheme will be granted to a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7532/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person mentioned commenced REPS 4 February 2009 and received payments for the first three years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be com-

pleted before any payments can issue. During the course of the administrative checks an issue was identified which required the submission of an amended agri-environmental plan. This plan was received in my Department on 7 January 2013 in the name of the son of the person named. Under the terms and conditions governing REPS 4 all "Change of Ownership" cases must be investigated before any payments can issue. The file is currently being examined with the intention of an early resolution and payment in respect of 2012.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals

166. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on a appeal to the disadvantaged area scheme appeals committee in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7535/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, there are two criteria to be satisfied in relation to horses. First, the holding itself must meet the definition of an Equine Breeding Enterprise and second, horses, in order to be taken into account for stocking density purposes, must be aged one to five years and, where older, must be a breeding mare for the purposes of the Scheme.

While the person named submitted three equine passports to my Department, as none was in respect of a breeding mare that foaled in either 2009,2010 or 2011, the scheme criteria have not been met. Accordingly, no payment is due under the 2012 Scheme. The applicant was advised of the position by letter dated 16 November 2012.

Common Agricultural Policy Reform

167. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the concerns about EU plans to publish individual farmers' Common Agricultural Policy details, including their addresses, on a website that could potentially be used by criminals. [7584/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The European Commission has proposed legislation on the publication of data on CAP beneficiaries. I am aware of the farmers' concerns in relation to the proposals. Detailed data on payments to CAP beneficiaries was published prior to November 2010 when the European Court of Justice found that aspects of the legislation were invalid having regard to an individual's right to privacy and protection of personal data. The new proposal aims to address the deficiencies identified in the Court's judgement. The European Commission's justification for the proposed measures is based on the need for greater transparency and public control over the use of European agricultural funds in order to protect the Union's financial interests. The proposal is being considered at the Council of Agricultural Ministers and any new arrangements that may be adopted will come into effect to coincide with the proposed reformed CAP regime.

Veterinary Inspection Service Staff

168. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will confirm that there will be no change to the status of the district veterinary office, County Cavan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7591/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is currently reviewing the administrative support for its 16 Regional Offices and, in particular, the centralisation of this support in one or more centralised office(s). Centralising administrative procedures would enable my Department to reduce the number of administrative staff it requires to support District Veterinary Office operations and, accordingly, the cost of providing its services. The administrative functions for Cork have been recently centralised in Cork city and the administrative functions in the Limerick DVO will shortly be transferred to Naas. It has also been decided to transfer the administrative functions out of the Tipperary regional office. The centralisation of administrative functions in other regional offices will be considered in light of the availability of opportunities to redeploy the staff concerned to support other critical public services. There are no plans for the closure of the Cavan office in the context of this review.

Single Payment Scheme Applications

169. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the full single farm payment will be granted to a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7604/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A request for a review of a 20% Cross Compliance penalty under the 2012 Single Payment Scheme relating to non-compliances under Statutory Management Requirement 4 (Nitrates) was received from the person named in November 2012. The applicant was advised, by letter dated 7 February 2013, of the outcome of this review, which was to uphold the original decision. The applicant was also advised of the right to appeal the outcome of the review to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within 3 months of the date of the review letter. Furthermore, the outcome of a separate review of a 3% penalty relating to Good Agricultural Environment Condition was also notified to the applicant by letter dated 7 February 2013. The applicant also has the right to appeal the outcome of this review to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within 3 months of the date of the review letter.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

170. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their disadvantaged area scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7609/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Following initial processing of the application of the person named, a dual claim was identified in respect of one land parcel declared. Following correspondence with my Department, the applicant confirmed in writing, on 10 September 2012, that he did not have the right to declare this parcel. As the dual-claimed parcel exceeded 20% of the overall area declared by the person named, no payment was due, as per the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme, based on the governing EU Regulations. My Department has recently been in direct contact with the person named, who again confirmed that he did not have the right to the parcel; the consequences were explained to and appreciated by the person named. The normal appeal processes remain available in any event.

Animal Welfare Bodies

171. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide in tabular form the number of animal welfare organisations including dog welfare groups that are in receipt of financial assistance from his Department; his views that all of these organisations are legally compliant with the law particularly as it relates to dog welfare, notification of local authority regarding inspection and in particular compliance in the area of fostering and muzzling of dogs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7618/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department provides funding to animal welfare organisations involved in the delivery of animal care to a range of companion animals including dogs. In December 2012, funding of €1.365 million was awarded to 140 organisations. Details of the recipients of funds are set out in the following table and are also available on my Departments website at: <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/animalhealthwelfare/animalwelfare/Listoforganisations150113.doc>.

In the context of providing this funding, my Department has adopted a proactive approach in relation to animal welfare in ensuring that the organisations in receipt of funding promote sound animal welfare and management practices. In this regard, the Department has issued a Code of Practice to all recipients of funds which set out recommendations for good welfare practice to which all should adhere. All recipients of funding involved in the re-homing of dogs must demonstrate that they are participating in a neutering programme in order to assist in controlling numbers of animals and avoid further cases of animal distress. We also remind recipients of the importance of compliance with legislation regarding the control of dogs, namely the Control of Dogs Acts, 1986 and Control of Dogs (Amendment) Act, 1992. Enforcement of this legislation rests with Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and local authorities.

TABLE

No.	RECIPIENTS NAME	AWARD
1	A Dog's Life, Glenmore, Co Kilkenny	€2,000
2	Ainmhithe Animal Rescue, Ballina, Co Mayo	€5,000
3	An Cat Dubh Sanctuary, Loughrea, Co Galway	€2,000
4	Animal Heaven Animal Rescue (AHAR), Gneeveguilla, Co Kerry	€10,000
5	Animal Help Net Kerry, C/o Beechlawn, Tralee, Co Kerry	€2,000
6	Animal Magic T/A Rosie Campbell, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick	€6,000
7	Animal Rescue Skibbereen, Co Cork	€10,000
8	Animal Trust Fund, Passage East, Co Waterford	€1,000
9	Animals in Need, Donegal Town, Co Donegal	€15,000
10	Athlone Animal Welfare, Athlone, Co Westmeath	€4,000
11	Athlone, West Midlands SPCA, Feevaghmore, Co Roscommon	€3,000
12	Audrey Quinn, "Fur Babies", Edenderry, Co. Offaly	€2,000
13	Avalon Greyhound Sanctuary Pro Animale Ireland Ltd, Co. Galway	€6,000
14	Bilberry Goat Heritage Trust, Rockmount, Co. Waterford	€4,000

Questions - Written Answers

No.	RECIPIENTS NAME	AWARD
15	Burren Animal Rescue, Tubber, Co Clare	€1,500
16	Carrick Dog Shelter, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan	€11,000
17	Cat and Dog Protection Association, Dublin 1	€15,000
18	Cat Concern Wicklow, Greystones, Co Wicklow	€2,000
19	Cats Aid, C/O "Murrisk", Mulhuddart, Dublin 15	€8,000
20	Cavan SPCA, Co. Cavan	€21,000
21	Chippers Sanctuary, Gorey, Co. Wexford	€2,000
22	Clare SPCA, Clonloghan, Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co. Clare	€10,000
23	Clifden Animal Rescue, Co Galway	€2,000
24	Clondalkin Animal Aid Ltd, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	€4,000
25	Collon Animal Sanctuary, Collon, Co. Louth	€9,000
26	Community Cats Network, Kilbrittain, Co Cork	€1,000
27	Cork Animal Care Society, Kilmichael, Co Cork	€4,000
28	Cork Cat Action Trust, Blackrock, Co Cork	€9,000
29	Cork SPCA, Mahon, Co. Cork	€10,000
30	Cork Dog Action Welfare Group Ltd (DAWG), Macroom, Co Cork	€8,000
31	Cottage Rescue, Cashel, County Tipperary	€6,000
32	Cry for Help Cattery, Mullingar Co. Westmeath	€5,000
33	Deise Animal Sanctuary, Ballymacarbry, Co Waterford	€4,000
34	Dog Rescue Ireland, The Ward, Co Dublin	€4,500
35	Dogs Aid Animal Sanctuary, Meaktown, Co Dublin	€5,000
36	Dogs in Distress, Ash Hill, Dunboyne, Co Meath	€6,000
37	Donegal Donkey Sanctuary, Castledooey, Raphoe, Co Donegal	€2,000
38	Dr. Homes Moate Dog Rescue, Moate, Co Westmeath	€5,000
39	Drogheda Animal Rescue, P.O. Box 159, Drogheda Co. Louth	€15,000
40	Dublin Animal Rescue Group, Dublin 9	€2,500
41	Dublin SPCA (Dogs & Cats Home), Rathfarnham, Dublin 16	€150,000
42	Dundalk Dog Rescue, Castlebellingham, Co. Louth	€5,000
43	Dungarvan SPCA Rescue Kennels, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford	€10,000
44	East Galway Animal Rescue, Loughrea, Co. Galway	€4,000
45	Enniscorthy SPCA, Enniscorthy Co. Wexford	€8,000
46	Fairy Glen Community Animal Sanctuary, Co. Roscommon	€8,000

No.	RECIPIENTS NAME	AWARD
47	Fellenberg Foundation Irl Ltd, Woodford, Co Galway	€1,000
48	Fingal SPCA, Portrane, Co Dublin	€2,000
49	Forgotten Horses Ireland, , Kilcolgan, Co Galway	€1,000
50	Friends for Wildlife, Letterfrack, Co. Galway	€2,000
51	Friends of Animals, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	€4,000
52	Galway and Claddagh Swan Rescue, Knocknacarra, Galway	€3,000
53	Galway Cat Rescue, Knocknacarra, Galway	€2,000
54	Galway SPCA, St. Augustine's Street , Galway	€26,000
55	Great Hounds in Need, Clonmel, Co Tipperary	€1,000
56	Hollys Horse Haven, Omeath, Co Louth	€7,000
57	Homes for Unwanted Greyhounds Beaufort, Co. Kerry	€3,500
58	Hungry Horse Outside Ltd, Newtownforbes, Co Longford	€1,000
59	Inistioge Puppy Rescue, Inistioge, Co. Kilkenny	€7,000
60	Irish Equine Welfare, Ardnacrusha, Co Clare	€1,500
61	Irish Horse Protection League, Blessington Co. Wicklow	€5,000
62	Irish Horse Welfare Trust, Arklow, Co. Wicklow	€35,000
63	Irish Raptor Research Centre (Eagles Flying), Ballymote, Co Sligo	€6,000
64	Irish Red Grouse Association, Oakpark Avenue, Carlow	€2,000
65	Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, , Kilrush, Co Clare	€1,500
66	ISPCA (Head Office), Derryglogher Lodge, Co. Longford	€150,000
67	ISPCA Carlow Branch, Tullow, Co Carlow	€3,500
68	ISPCA Victor Dowling, Mallow, Co. Cork	€10,000
69	Joan's A.R.C, Glangevlin, Co Cavan	€4,000
70	Kathleen Barrett, Athea, Co Limerick	€1,000
71	Kath's Kitty Corner, , Ballymote, Co Sligo	€1,000
72	Kerry SPCA, Rackett Lane, Tralee, Co. Kerry	€6,000
73	Kildare & West Wicklow SPCA, Kilcullen , Co. Kildare	€11,000
74	Kilkenny SPCA, Unit 39, Hebron Road, Kilkenny	€8,000
75	KLAWS, Kenmare, Co. Kerry	€2,000
76	Laois SPCA, Portlaoise, Co Laois	€10,000
77	Last Hope Animal Charity, Navan, Co Meath	€6,000
78	Leitrim Animal Welfare Centre Ltd, Drumkeeran, Co. Leitrim	€15,000
79	Littlehill Animal Sanctuary, Ballymore Eustace, Co. Kildare	€1,000

Questions - Written Answers

No.	RECIPIENTS NAME	AWARD
80	Lilys Dog Rescue, Shercock, Co Cavan	€1,000
81	Limerick Animal Welfare Ltd, Greystones, Limerick	€28,000
82	Limerick Feral Cat, Corbally, Limerick	€1,000
83	Limerick SPCA, The Secretary, Hyde Road Limerick	€10,000
84	Longford SPCA , No.2 Market Square, Longford	€15,000
85	Louth SPCA Ltd , Dundalk, Co. Louth	€15,000
86	MADRA , Connemara Kennels, Co Galway	€3,000
87	Mallow Animal Rescue, Mallow, Co Cork	€1,000
88	Mayo Animal Welfare, Westport, Co. Mayo	€2,500
89	Mayo SPCA Ltd, Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo	€7,000
90	Meath SPCA, Duleek, Co Meath	€9,000
91	Mo Chara Animal Rescue Centre Ltd, Thurles, Co Tipperary	€6,000
92	Monaghan SPCA, Emyvale, Co. Monaghan	€18,000
93	Monkey Sanctuary Ireland Ltd, Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow	€2,000
94	Munster Lost and Found Pet Helpline, Ballinhasig, Co Cork	€4,000
95	National Exotic Animal Sanctuary, Ballivor, Co. Meath	€5,000
96	New Ross SPCA, Foulksmills, Co. Wexford	€10,000
97	North County Dublin SPCA, Drumcondra, Dublin 9	€15,000
98	North West Pet Protection Ltd./ Donegal Pet Rescue, Co. Donegal	€15,000
99	North West SPCA Ltd, Carrowreagh, Ballina, Co. Mayo	€19,000
100	North Wexford SPCA, Parkville 4 Glen Courtown, Co. Wexford	€14,000
101	Offaly SPCA Ltd, 5 Arden Vale, Tullamore, Co. Offaly	€14,000
102	Pauline's Rescue, Lauragh, Milford, Charleville, Co Cork	€9,000
103	Paw Pourri Animal Rescue, Cronin's Yard, Ennis, Co Clare	€1,500
104	PAWS Animal Rescue, Mullinahone, Co Tipperary	€20,000
105	Petwatch Ltd, 132 Rialto Cottages, Dublin 8	€4,500
106	Precious Paws Animal Sanctuary, Gurteen, Co Sligo	€1,000
107	Red's Sanctuary, Mountain View, Kiltimagh, Co Mayo	€1,000
108	Remi le Mahieu T/A Animal Sanctuary Hubasha, (ASH), Co. Wicklow	€15,000

No.	RECIPIENTS NAME	AWARD
109	Renvyle Cat and Dog Rescue, Connemara, Co Galway	€2,000
110	Roscommon SPCA , P.O. Box 10, Castlerea, Co Roscommon	€10,000
111	Roscrea SPCA, Rosemount House Roscrea Co. Tipperary	€11,000
112	Rover Rescue, Ennis, Co Clare	€3,000
113	Rural Animal Welfare Resources (RAWR), Bantry, Co Cork	€9,000
114	Sathya Sai Sanctuary, Trust for Nature, Castlebaldwin, Co. Sligo	€9,000
115	Second Chance Animal Rescue Ltd, Shannon, Co Clare	€7,000
116	Sligo Dog Welfare Services, Drumcliff, Co. Sligo	€2,000
117	South East Animal Rescue, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford	€3,000
118	South Tipperary Dog Rescue, Farranacliffe, Co Tipperary	€1,000
119	St Francis Dispensary for Sick and Injured Animals, Inchicore, Dublin 8	€8,000
120	Sylvia Muhlbachler, Shean, Edenderry, Co Offaly	€2,500
121	Taffy's Friends , Ballinlough, Co Roscommon	€1,000
122	The Daisy Fund , Tralee, Co Kerry	€1,000
123	The Donkey Sanctuary, Mallow, Co. Cork	€60,000
124	The Equus Foundation, Naas Co Kildare	€3,000
125	The Inner City Cat Rescue Group, Ballybough, Dublin 3	€2,500
126	The Irish Blue Cross, Inchicore , Dublin 8	€57,000
127	The Sunset Appeal, "Panwa", NewRoss , Co. Wexford	€2,000
128	Tipp Friends of Animals SPCA , Nenagh , Co. Tipperary	€4,000
129	Tipperary SPCA, Savannah House, Clonmel Co. Tipperary	€10,000
130	Tipp-Off Animal Rescue, Birr, Co. Offaly	€10,000
131	Traveller Animal Welfare, Rathdrum, Co Wicklow	€3,000
132	Waterford Animal Welfare, Tramore, Co Waterford	€10,000
133	Waterford SPCA , Yellow Road, Co Waterford	€15,000
134	West Cork Animal Welfare Group, Clonakilty , Co. Cork	€10,000
135	Westmeath SPCA, Killucan, Co. Westmeath	€10,000
136	Westown Animal Shelter, Naas, Co. Kildare	€4,000
137	Wexford SPCA, Distillery Road, Co Wexford	€28,000
138	Whiskers New Park Animal Sanctuary , Leatra, Williamstown, Co Galway	€4,000

No.	RECIPIENTS NAME	AWARD
139	Wicklow Cats, 15 Broudlough View, Greenhill Road, Wicklow	€1,000
140	Wicklow SPCA, Ballygannon Mor, Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow	€26,000
		€1,365,000

Bovine Disease Controls

172. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will confirm the number of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis reactors that have been taken out under section 20 of the Diseases of Animals Act 1966 since its inception; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that in failing to take out bovine TB and brucellosis reactors under section 20 of the 1966 Act he is committing a criminal offence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7635/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Bovine Brucellosis and TB reactors are removed under Section 20 of the Diseases of Animals Act, 1966 (as amended). This Act makes general provision for the control and eradication of disease, the categories of animals and classes of diseases to which the Act applies. Section 20 of the Act empowers the Minister to make Ministerial Orders for specified purposes and the nature of offences that may be prosecuted. The Bovine Tuberculosis (Attestation of the State and General Provisions) Order, 1989 was made under powers conferred by several sections, including Section 20, of the Act. The Order provides for, inter alia, the prohibition of tuberculosis testing without Department permission, the type of test to be used, the tagging of reactors, the removal, movement, control and slaughter of reactors. Similarly the Brucellosis in Cattle (General Provisions) Order, 1991 as amended was made under powers conferred by the Diseases of Animals Act, 1966, including section 20, and contains similar provisions to the TB Order.

The information relating to the total number of animals removed as TB and Brucellosis reactors under the Act is not readily available. However, with regard to bovine TB, the number of reactors removed in selected years since 1960 is set out in the following Table. I am pleased to be able to say that the TB situation has been steadily improving over the past 10 years or so as evidenced by the significant reduction in disease levels over the past decade. For example, herd incidence has fallen from 7.5% in 2000 to 4.21% last year and reactor numbers in 2012 were, at 18,476, the lowest recorded since the commencement of the programme in the 1950s. I am hopeful that the incidence of TB can be maintained at or below these levels. Ireland is free of Brucellosis in sheep, pigs and cattle.

TABLE 1.

Year	No. of Reactors								
1960	139,881	1984	31,715	1992	35,997	2000	39,847	2008	29,901
1965	23,378	1985	32,608	1993	30,359	2001	33,702	2009	23,786
1970	35,982	1986	28,179	1994	30,439	2002	28,930	2010	20,211
1975	21,339	1987	27,682	1995	33,180	2003	27,978	2011	18,531
1980	29,827	1988	29,994	1996	30,400	2004	22,967	2012	18,476
1981	31,542	1989	43,580	1997	28,647	2005	25,884		
1982	30,013	1990	41,419	1998	44,498	2006	24,173		
1983	30,330	1991	36,832	1999	44,903	2007	27,711		

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Applications

173. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 833 of 16 January 2013, the position regarding an agri-environment options scheme application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7638/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Agri-environment Options Scheme was received in the Johnstown Castle Office of my Department from the person named on 28 November 2012. The initial processing of the applications has been completed and acknowledgement letters will shortly issue to all applicants. Following that the detailed actions listed in each application will be recorded and all applications will be ranked and selected according to the predetermined selection criteria. This process is expected to take several weeks and letters will issue to all applicants informing them of the outcome of the selection process in due course.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

174. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 424 of 11 December 2012, when payment of an agri-environment options scheme will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7641/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from 1 September 2011. Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. During these checks issues were identified in relation to the claimed areas on the Species Rich Grassland and Traditional Hay Meadow actions. To date 75% payment totalling €780.29 has issued in respect of 2011 and my Department is currently examining the outstanding issues associated with the over-claims identified. Once these issues are satisfactorily resolved the balancing 25% payment in respect of 2011 will issue at the earliest opportunity.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

175. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on an application for derogation of a disadvantaged area scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7651/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named is one of a number, their derogation application having been unsuccessful, who were offered the option to appeal to the independently chaired DAS Appeals Committee. To date, this option has not been availed of. Should the applicant choose to appeal, it will be referred to the Committee.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals

176. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a disadvantaged area scheme derogation appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo. [7653/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named is one of a number of applicants under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, whose cases are impacted by the requirement of a minimum stocking density of 0.3 livestock units per forage hectare and who applied for and were refused derogation in this regard. The person named subsequently availed of the option to appeal to the independently chaired DAS Appeals Committee. The Committee has adjudicated on this appeal and the person concerned has been notified of the unsuccessful outcome, in writing, on 9 January 2013. As advised in the letter, it is open to the person named to pursue the matter with the Office of the Ombudsman.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

177. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath will receive their agricultural entitlements for 2011 and 2012. [7672/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Full payment in respect of applications received under the 2011 Single Payment, Disadvantaged Areas and Grassland Sheep schemes issued directly to the bank account of the person named. Payment in respect of applications received under the 2012 Single Payment and Disadvantaged Areas scheme issued on the 24th December 2012 to the estate of the deceased. No payment was due under the Grassland Sheep Scheme in 2012 as there were no breeding ewes identified on the Sheep Census Form.

On the 18th January 2013 and again on the 30th January 2013, officials from my department informed the legal representatives of the person named of the requirement for a transfer of the herd number and the single payment entitlements to the person named to be effected for the 2013 scheme year.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

178. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a farm and disadvantaged area payments which are now overdue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7673/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): During processing of the SPS application received from the person named, an issue arose in relation to the reference area of a land parcel declared. That issue was resolved in early January 2013 and the full payments due issued on 11th January 2013, in respect of the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and on 3rd January 2013, in respect of the Single Payment Scheme.

Horse Slaughtering Data

179. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will indicate the number of horses slaughtered in Ireland in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012; and the total tonnage of horse meat produced each year in the same period; and if he

will make a statement on the matter. [7693/13]

182. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the tonnage of horse meat exported in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012; and if he will indicate the countries the horse meat was exported; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7696/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 179 and 182 together.

The number of horses slaughtered in plants approved by my Department in each of the years since 2008 was as follows:

YEAR	NUMBER OF HORSES
2008	2,002
2009	3,220
2010	7,296
2011	12,575
2012	11,402

I understand from the Food Safety Authority of Ireland that the following numbers of horses were slaughtered in local authority approved slaughter plants since 2008:

YEAR	NUMBER OF HORSES
2008	Nil
2009	1,027
2010	2,494
2011	4,985
2012	12,960

Data is not collected by my Department on the total tonnages of horsemeat produced or exported each year.

Horse Population Census

180. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department has carried out a census of the overall number of horses here including thoroughbreds in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012; if he will indicate the way the numbers were estimated and if new horse registration arrangements are in operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7694/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has not undertaken a census of horses. As stated in my reply to the Deputy on 22 January, the Central Statistics Office has recently published a Census of Agriculture for 2010, which shows the number of horses in the country returned at 106,020 of which 37,513 were thoroughbred horses and ponies.

However, the most recent estimate of the number of horses in Ireland is provided by a report commissioned by Horse Sport Ireland and conducted by UCD on the economic contribution of

the Sport Horse industry to the Irish economy. This report estimated the total horse population in Ireland at approximately 180,000. These figures were compiled using a number of sources, such as Central Statistics Office data, the records of approved horse registration organisations and surveys of a wide range of parties in the industry itself.

EU legislation on the identification of equines, which was transposed into national legislation in 2011 via S.I. No. 357 of 2011, provides that (i) equine animals registered after July 2009 must be identified with a passport and a microchip and (ii) if an equine animal has not been identified within six months of the date of its birth, or by the 31st of December in the year of its birth, whichever date occurs later, it cannot be admitted to the food chain. This legislation was amended in September 2012 (S.I. 371 of 2012) in order to strengthen the powers of the Minister in relation to approval of an issuing body for equine passports and prosecutions in relation to equine identification and to make it an offence to forge or tamper with an equine passport.

My Department of Agriculture is also developing a central database of horses which will involve migration of selected data from Passport Issuing Organisations to the Department. The database will be populated by information provided from the databases maintained by the Passport Issuing Organisations, by the Department from records obtained at slaughter plants and knackeries and by Local Authority Veterinary Inspectors in respect of records maintained at appropriate slaughter plants. The intention is that this database will be used at abattoirs to verify the authenticity of the passport for the equine presented and to record its date of slaughter.

Food Imports

181. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of beef, poultry, lamb and other meat products that were imported into Ireland in 2008, 2009, 2010; 2011, and 2012; if he will also indicate the reason for these level of imports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7695/13]

186. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason, in a country that produces an abundance of excellent beef, we are importing beef from other countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7751/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 181 and 186 together.

It is assumed that the Deputies are referring to goods originating outside Ireland whether as a result of trade within the EU single market or imports sourced from non-EU countries. In either case, the importation of meat and meat products into Ireland is a function of supply and demand dynamics, both locally and generally, and is influenced by factors which are variable over time such as price relativities, currency exchange rates and consumer preferences.

The statistics show that Ireland is a major meat trader and also a significant beneficiary of free trade in food products, with total meat and livestock exports generating estimated earnings of almost €3 billion in 2012.

Data on volume imports of various meats from 2008 to 2012 is presented hereunder.

Meat Imports – Tonnes (000's) cwe

Category	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 (Jan. – Nov.)
Beef	33	34	40	46	36

Category	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 (Jan. – Nov.)
Pigmeat	76	74	73	79	75
Poultrymeat	76	75	80	86	91
Sheepmeat	3	4	3	3	3
Other Meat Products	15	12	13	12	11

Source: CSO

Beef

Around 36,000 tonnes of beef were imported into Ireland last year with over 28,000 tonnes (79%) came from UK; of which almost 26,000 tonnes (72%) was from Great Britain and over 2,700 tonnes (7+%) from Northern Ireland. The majority of these imports from the UK consisted of cow carcasses for further processing before being re-exported as primal joints. Brazil, Uruguay and the USA are the principal non-EU suppliers of beef into Ireland. Processors import beef from a range of countries in order to produce specific products for the export market at particular price points.

It is also worth pointing out that import figures are relatively small when compared to the quantity of beef exports. For example in 2012, Ireland exported over 412,000 tonnes of beef – virtually all of it to other EU member states – which was nearly 12 times as much as it imported.

Pigmeat

In 2012, almost 75,000 tonnes of pigmeat was imported into Ireland. Around 29,000 tonnes (38%) of imports came from the UK with 4 other member states – Denmark, France, Germany and the Netherlands – cumulatively accounting for some 39,000 tonnes (52%) of volume. Pigmeat imports are destined for secondary processors, wholesale and foodservice operators. Ireland has an import requirement for loin and leg primal because domestic consumers' preference for loin (pork chops, bacon, rashers) and leg (cooked ham, gammons) differs from that in other European countries where more processed meats are preferred. The price differential between Irish and imported loins is approximately 20%. There is little difference in the price of indigenous versus imported legs but supply is an issue.

Poultrymeat

Ireland imports significant volumes of poultrymeat annually; namely broiler, turkey and duck. Broiler meat in the form of chicken breast meat (frozen / chilled / cooked) comes principally from Great Britain, the Netherlands, France, Germany and also international markets such as Thailand and Brazil. The product is used for wholesale, foodservice and further manufacturing. Turkey breast meat and crowns are imported mainly from Italy and Germany for cooked meats manufacturing and for catering / foodservice outlets. Whole turkeys, imported from Italy for the Christmas period, are supplied through the wholesale and butcher sectors. Typical cost differentials for imported versus domestic chicken and turkey can amount to as much as 30%.

Sheepmeat

Of the 3,467 tonnes of sheepmeat imported into the Irish market last year, almost 3,300 tonnes (94%) came from the UK. Imports, which peaked during the February to June period, were mainly British hoggets destined for food manufacturing and, to a lesser extent, foodservice. Imports from non-EU countries, primarily frozen product from New Zealand, were negligible at 83 tonnes. At present, Irish lamb commands a strong position in the domestic retail

sector. The use of the Bord Bia Quality logo on-pack is growing in popularity since its launch on lamb in 2008. According to Bord Bia retail store audits, the percentage of facings of lamb product with the Quality Mark has risen from 55% to 84% in the 2 years from December 2010.

Other Meat Products

Products in this miscellaneous category, which includes offal, are imported mainly from the UK (47%) and the Netherlands (23%).

Conclusion

Ireland is a small, open economy that is hugely dependant on international trade flows in products and services. The above data demonstrate the extent to which the beef and other meat industries are reliant on trade with our EU partners and, by extension, the importance of that trade to the national economy.

Question No. 182 answered with Question No. 179.

Equine Exports

183. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of horses and ponies including thoroughbreds that were exported in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7697/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The number of horses certified for export by my Department during the years in question is as set out in the following table.

YEAR	NO. OF HORSES
2008	2229
2009	2702
2010	2306
2011	2557
2012	2369

The movement of equidae within Member States of the EU is subject to harmonised rules as outlined in Council Directive 2009/156/EC to prevent the spread of disease. However, in view of the fact that they have broadly similar animal health standards in relation to equidae, Ireland, the United Kingdom and France have availed of a derogation in the Directive to permit trade in registered equidae, other than those going for slaughter, to move between these countries without the prior inspection and certification. This is known as the Tripartite Agreement (TPA) and it has been in existence for many years and commits members to notify each other of confirmed cases of listed diseases that would alter the equivalence status. Given the integrated, all-island nature of the equine industry in Ireland the TPA has particular benefits for the equine sector here. Furthermore, the operation of the TPA is reviewed regularly by the signatory countries to ensure its effectiveness and deal with any strategic or operational matters of concern. The records available to my Department would indicate that approximately 16,000 horses are moved from Ireland annually under this arrangement. These are in addition to the numbers set out in the table above.

Animal Feedstuffs

184. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the proportion of horse meat goes into the production of prepared meat dishes and nuts for dogs and other prepared foods sold for dogs through supermarkets and shops; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7698/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The manufacture of pet food in Ireland is governed by EU regulations relating to animal by-products (ABPs), which provide that this product must be processed in a plant approved by the competent authority and to the parameters specified in the legislation.

The regulations permit the manufacture of pet food from specified ABPs, including ABPs which are fit for human consumption but are not intended for human consumption for commercial or other reasons. I understand that none of the pet food manufacturers approved by my Department under the EU regulations uses horsemeat as an ingredient in the manufacture of their pet food product.

Food Labelling

185. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will confirm that no thoroughbred or champion racehorses and jumpers or other Irish horses and ponies entered the Irish food chain or were exported as horsemeat; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7699/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): All types of equines can be slaughtered for human consumption, subject to compliance with the relevant legislation. In particular the animals are required to be properly identified in accordance with EU and national legislation. Equines issued with a passport after 1 July 2009 must have a corresponding microchip implanted by a veterinarian, which is recorded in the passport and creates a link between the passport and the animal. The passport includes information on any veterinary medicines administered to equines. An equine for slaughter for human consumption must be accompanied to the slaughterhouse by its passport and the information on the passport determines whether the animal can be slaughtered for human consumption. Horses treated with certain veterinary medicines such as phenylbutazone, known in the industry as 'bute', are permanently excluded from the human food chain in order to protect public health and the passport of the horse in question is endorsed by the prescribing veterinary practitioner to this effect.

My Department implements official controls in relation to horse identification at marts and other sales venues, in abattoirs under its supervision and at points of entry to the country. The Department has detailed procedures for the slaughter of horses in abattoirs under its supervision and has communicated these and the checks required both to its staff and the business operators. It has liaised with passport issuing agencies in Ireland and has developed protocols to allow abattoir operators to check the details of passports with these agencies to ensure that they are valid and that only those horses eligible for slaughter are slaughtered.

Question No. 186 answered with Question No. 181.

Departmental Advertising Budgets

187. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine fur-

ther to Parliamentary Question 629 of 24 April 2012 if he will detail in tabular form, the number of leases, location and the number of leases with upward only rent clauses for each year since 2010 in which the Department is the lessor. [7760/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): It is not possible to provide this information in the required time. I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Question No. 188 answered with Question No. 38.

Juvenile Offenders

189. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which her Department expects to examine issues surrounding juvenile offenders with particular reference to identifying the social and-or economic contributory factors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7572/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I would like to inform the Deputy that the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) which is based in my Department and includes officials from the Department of Justice and Equality is currently developing a Youth Justice Action Plan which will sit within the Children and Young People's Policy Framework (CYPPF) 2013-2018 currently being developed in my Department but will also form part of the National Anti-Crime Strategy being developed as part of the draft White Paper on Crime being finalised by my colleague Minister Shatter.

Youth crime will always be a concern but we now know from hard data that the vast majority of young people grow out of crime. In order for the public to have confidence in a youth justice system, it needs to be reasonably assured that it is effective in its policies and delivery.

The focus for the forthcoming Youth Justice Action Plan will be to continue the downward trends in high volume crime and detention; becoming more adept in understanding and intervening in more serious crime offending patterns; and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of these interventions in addressing the behaviour and needs of these children. The Plan involves evidence-informed targeted interventions to achieve better outcomes for children who get into trouble with the law, and to reduce crime leading to safer communities. Importantly, the voice and experiences of children involved in the youth justice system have influenced the development of these interventions.

Of course, the Deputy will be aware that my Department is responsible for a range of supports to families and children which, although not directly related to juvenile offenders, seek to address many of the social and economic contributory factors. I hope to bring a seamless new approach to policy development and integrated service provision for children so that they have the best possible start to life. In order to design and develop effective policies and services that make a difference, then as a first step, we need to better understand our children: their lives, their experiences, their expectations.

My Department's National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives 2011-2016 sets out a 5 year plan to guide and support the development and use of research and data on children's lives, for the purpose of improving understandings and creating an evidence base to support policy and practice. Several of the priority areas identified in the strategy relate to the experience of children and young people in contact or in danger of coming in contact with the justice system.

The Deputy will be aware of the commitment given at broader systemic and cultural level through the way we deliver services, in particular through the work of the new Child and Family Support Agency (CFSA) which will be established this year. At the heart of the new Agency will be a new Service Delivery Framework, which will differentiate between child welfare and protection cases, such that family and child welfare concerns can be responded to by new multi-agency, community-based models for early intervention and family support. The new Agency will represent the practical application of a new approach towards ‘proportionate’ service responses.

Youth Services Provision

190. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the degree to which she continues to engage with youth organisations in the context of meeting the requirements of children and young people in general; if any particular issues have arisen wherein her Department may be able to make a positive intervention with particular reference to the impact of the ongoing economic situation on young people; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7573/13]

191. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she has identified the main issues affecting young people in today’s economic situation; the degree to which she can find herself in a position to respond to any such needs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7574/13]

194. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which research has been undertaken to identify the most common causes of concern and stress amongst young people in modern times; the extent to which any corrective measures can be put in place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7577/13]

198. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she and/or her Department will provide intervention and/or support services to teenagers or young people who are subjected to bullying outside of school hours or in employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7581/13]

200. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will outline the extent to which she and her Department have identified the most serious deficiencies in children and youth support or other services; the progress made in addressing such issues; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7583/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 190, 191, 194, 198 and 200 together.

Funding of €53.173m, including €1.75 for a new capital funding programme, has been provided to my Department in 2013 for the provision of youth services and programmes to young people throughout the country through a number of schemes.

These schemes include the Youth Service Grant Scheme, the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young People’s Facilities and Services Fund Rounds 1 and 2, Local Drug Task Force projects and certain other provisions including the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme and Youth Information Centres. This funding supports the delivery of a range of youth work programmes and services for all young people, including those from disadvantaged communities, by the voluntary youth sector. There are some 1,400 youth work staff in 477 projects and over 40,000 volunteers involved in the provision of services and activities for young people.

Each year over 380,000 young people participate in youth services. Youth work and non formal learning in its many programmes and activities; recreational, sporting, learning, volunteering and personal development, offers young people opportunities to acquire new competences and skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, resilience, motivation, creativity and leadership. These are core and transferable life skills; the 21st century skills that are so important to equip young people for the challenges in today's world.

There is a growing recognition in Ireland and across Europe of the significance of youth work in promoting young people's development, health and wellbeing, enhancing their participation in education, training and employment and the potential youth work has, as part of wider strategies to respond to the challenges that arise, as a result of the current economic situation, such as youth employment. My Department is working closely with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and Education and Skills and Department of Social Protection in the context of the Government's Action Plan for Jobs to identify in what ways the youth sector can contribute to shared policy objectives to address youth employment. As part of the programme of the EU Presidency of the Youth Council, I will hold an expert round table on the subject in on 21st June 2013.

The role of research and consultations with youth sector interests and the young people themselves are central elements in my Department's approach to the formulation of the youth policy services that are responsive to young peoples needs. My Department has commissioned a review of international best practice in the field of youth work to advance our understanding of the impact of youth services in the lives of children and young people. The study will inform a new Youth Policy Framework which is planned by my Department for later this year. The findings of the Growing Up In Ireland Study of my Department and other studies including EU studies have been significant in relation to providing information about children and young peoples experience of bullying and its impact on them.

The Action Plan on Bullying - produced by cross-sectoral working group on which my Department and the youth services were represented, contains a range of evidence based actions to support parents, young people, schools and community interests, in tackling this issue which can have a serious impact on young people. My Department will work closely with the Department of Education and Skills on the implementation of the Action Plan and is undertaking a series of initiatives to raise awareness about the problem and the measures to be taken to tackle prejudice and promote a safer environment for our young people. The Youth Clubs funded by my Department are an important outlet for children and young people in this context. Their activities can help to build self esteem, increase confidence and strengthen friendships so that young people are better equipped to counter bullying behaviour.

Consultations with young people themselves and their identification of needs for supports and facilities is a core feature of the National Play and Recreation policy. As a result of the policy many local authorities have developed world class play facilities. Youth cafes funded by my Department are a particular success responding directly to teenagers identified need for places to 'hang out' and an alternative to pub and drug culture. My Department estimates that there are between 75 and 100 youth cafes now in place around the country. I will shortly be announcing details of the €1.75m in capital funding that is available this year for the further development of these and other facilities to respond to young people.

My Department works closely with the youth sector organisations to address the needs of children and young people. The National Youth Work Advisory Committee is an important source of advice and guidance to my Department in developing youth policy and initiatives. The committee is composed of a chairperson and 32 members drawn equally from the voluntary and statutory sectors involved in the administration and provision of youth work programmes

and services. This committee advises my Department on matters relating to the development and coordination of youth work policies, programmes and services.

Question No. 192 answered with Question No. 25.

Mental Health Awareness

193. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will indicate, arising from her discussions with youth organisations and health service providers, the extent to which the issue of depression affecting young people has been examined; if it has been found possible to identify particular issues that might be addressed with a view to alleviation of the consequences of such depression; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7576/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The prime responsibility for policy in relation to the treatment and support for young people with depression currently lies with the Department of Health. The issue of depression in young people is a complex issue requiring inputs from a wide range of stake-holders including young people, parents, schools, the media, youth organisations and the Primary Care and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services of the Health Service Executive (HSE).

My Department supports the National Youth Health Programme in partnership with the HSE and the National Youth Council of Ireland. The programme's aims are to provide a broad-based, flexible health promotion/education support and training service to youth organisations and to all those working with young people in out-of-school settings. Its work programme is informed by the knowledge and experience of the partners involved and most particularly by the Health Promotion Unit of the HSE and by the National Youth Council of Ireland which is the representative body for some 50 youth organisations in Ireland.

This work is achieved through the development of programmes and interventions specifically for and with youth organisations throughout the country and the provision of training and support for workers and volunteers who implement these programmes. It is covered under the Mindout Mental Health Promotion training and resource pack delivered to youth organisations. The training is based on the resource Mindout which was developed by Health Promotion HSE West and NUI Galway. MindOut is a twelve session mental health programme which takes a positive approach to the promotion of emotional and mental health among young people, looking at the ways they cope ranging from personal coping skills to informal networks of support to professional or voluntary support services. Mindout adopts a universal mental health promotion approach which has strong links with the "Support for all" element of the recent guidelines on Mental Health Promotion for Schools published by the HSE, the Department of Education and Skills and the National Office for Suicide Prevention.

The National Youth Health Programme also offers a Specialist Certificate in Youth Health Promotion. This programme is accredited by NUI Galway and adopts a whole organisational approach to health promotion. It focuses on a holistic model of an individual's health and mental health and reinforces youth work as a valuable setting for mental health promotion. Actions needed to address this issue obviously extend beyond the remit of my Department. My Department is currently leading the preparation of the new Children and Young People's Policy Framework which will represent a whole-of-government approach to addressing issue affecting children and young people including their well being.

Question No. 194 answered with Question No. 190.

Youth Unemployment Measures

195. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her Department can take any particular initiatives arising from the consequences of youth unemployment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7578/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Government is committed to creating the environment for a strong economic recovery to support employment creation and jobs growth. Youth unemployment is a particular concern because of the difficulties it poses for young people themselves, their personal development and for social inclusion. The Government has a range of measures in place to tackle youth unemployment and these include initiatives in respect of education, training, job search assistance/work experience and support for job creation.

As Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, I have sought to highlight and promote the potential of youth work as part of the continuum of youth employment supports and I welcome the growing recognition in Ireland and across Europe of the potential of youth work services to enhance employability of young people. Each year over 380,000 young people participate in youth work services throughout Ireland. Youth Work and non-formal learning, in its many programmes and activities can offer young people opportunities, including valuable volunteering opportunities, which can aid young people in acquiring new competences and skills and in turn enhance employability and job-readiness.

This is particularly relevant in the case of young people who are otherwise marginalised from traditional services, such as those who are not in education, employment or training, the so called NEETs cohort. Existing youth work services already provide a significant level of engagement with this cohort and have the potential to provide a value-added not readily available from other activation programmes, through provision of outreach, intervention and bridging programmes focused on developing skill-sets and job-readiness. Already a number of Irish youth services have begun piloting innovative community-based programmes focussed on supporting youth employment.

My Department and I will continue to engage with the newly-established National Youth Work Advisory Committee and other Government Departments to explore how such initiatives can be supported as part of the Government's overall activation programme. Minister Bruton is currently finalising the 2013 Action Plan for Jobs on behalf of the Government and in that context my Department is working closely with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on the inclusion in the plan of appropriate actions relating to the contribution of the youth sector in supporting youth employment, including through a greater focus on promoting and supporting volunteering opportunities.

In line with the Ireland's overall EU Presidency priority theme of 'Jobs, Stability & Growth', I have sought to prioritise youth employment during my Presidency of the EU Council of Youth Ministers. The Europe 2020 growth agenda emphasises the need to "*develop youth work as a resource to support youth employability*" while the current EU Strategy for Youth (2009) contains a key objective to "*develop youth work as a resource to support youth employability*".

With this in mind, Ireland's Youth Presidency Programme includes a priority focus on maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy, in particular with respect to supporting youth employability. Work is underway on draft council conclusions which I hope will be agreed at the EU Council of Youth Ministers meeting in Brussels in May which I will chair. I also plan, as part of the Presidency programme, to host an expert round table event on quality youth work and its contribution to Europe 2020 and youth

employment in June of this year.

Child Protection Issues

196. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will set out her proposals to enhance the extent of child protection measures throughout the country with particular reference to early intervention in situations of suspected child abuse of a physical and/or sexual nature; the extent to which adequate resources are available to her Department in line with assessments undertaken in this regard by her officials; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7579/13]

197. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she intends to enhance the procedures to ensure a rapid response to reports and/or suspicions of child abuse; if she has in mind any particular initiatives in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7580/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 196 and 197 together.

The Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, which I published in 2011, provides clarity and guidance for individuals and organisations in identifying and responding appropriately to child abuse and neglect. It also sets out what organisations that care for or work with children should do to ensure they are safe whilst in the care of the organisation.

Child Welfare and Protection Referrals and Assessment

Once a referral has been made to the HSE Children and Family Services all cases are managed through a standardised business process. All reports of concern for the safety or well-being of a child are handled initially by the Duty/Intake team for the purposes of assessment. All staff receiving such a referral are trained in the duty system and are obliged to treat seriously all child welfare and protection concerns whatever their source. Once a report has been made the screening stage deals with the information reported and preliminary enquiries are concerned with formulating an appropriate response.

Once it is agreed by the Duty Team Leader that it is a correct referral the case is allocated immediately for an Initial Assessment. This is a time limited process to allow the gathering of sufficient information on the needs and risks within a case so that informed decisions and recommendations can be made and actions that will result in better outcomes for children are taken. The duty team leader, together with members of the team, will categorise the information received under the following categories:

- level 1 - child and family must be seen immediately
- level 2 - child and family must be seen within 3 days
- level 3 - child and family must be seen within 7 days

Comprehensive information on the extensive process is available on the HSE website under the Standardised Business Process documentation.

Children and Family Services Change Programme

Currently, HSE Children and Family Services are engaged in a major programme of reform.

A major element of the reform programme involves implementing consistent and timely child protection procedures in line with the revised Children First National Guidance, through a single, national, service delivery model, which is in development, and through the introduction of a National Child Care Information System (NCCIS). The NCCIS will be the central system supporting Social Work services. As a social work case management system, it will be used to record and store the case history of every child and other clients of the service. Management information will be derived automatically from the case management system. The introduction of the NCCIS is a high priority and will help in the management of social work case management and will significantly improve the level, quality and accessibility of information in respect of Children and Family Services.

Resources

The Deputy will be aware that *Children First* has operated on the basis of voluntary compliance since it was first published by the then Department of Health and Children in 1999. Significant resources have been put in place to support the implementation of *Children First* and in the case of the HSE and An Garda Síochána, *Children First* has formed an integral part of their existing operations and practices. The HSE has provided training, information and advice on the implementation of *Children First* throughout the HSE, voluntary and community sector. In addition to the existing structures in place to support *Children First*, significant additional resources have been provided to the HSE over the past few years to increase the number of social workers in the child welfare and protection area. The recruitment of these additional social workers was included in the Ryan Report Implementation Plan, as was the commitment to place Children First on a statutory basis.

Children First Legislation

The Deputy will be aware that I published the Heads of the Children First Bill in April 2012. The purpose of the Bill is to ensure that organisations and professionals who work with children have a statutory responsibility to report reasonable concerns about the abuse or neglect of children in their care to the HSE Child and Family Services. I asked the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children to consider the Heads of the Children First Bill and make recommendations. Following receipt of the Committee's report, my Department is currently, in preparation of the legislation, considering the recommendations along with the broad range of submissions made, including any need for additional reporting guidance.

New Child and Family Support Agency

The commitment to establish a new Child and Family Support Agency is at the heart of the Government's reform of child and family services. The new Agency will assume responsibility for Children and Family Services, currently provided by the HSE, and the Family Support Agency. It will have a workforce of approximately 4,000 staff, and a combined existing budget of over €590 million. The Agency will be headed by Gordon Jeyes, as the Chief Executive designate, who will be supported by a senior management team.

In order to achieve genuine improvements for children and families, the Agency will have a broader focus than child protection. Prevention, early intervention, family support and therapeutic & care interventions are all key to the provision of integrated multi-disciplinary services for children and families based on identified need. It is my intention that the new Agency will address the persistent issues which have been raised regarding the standardisation of services, communication, coordination and sharing of risk assessment, management and treatment for many of the children and families with the most complex needs. At the same time, the Agency will have a role in supporting families - providing less complex, less intrusive and less expensive responses which have a preventive function. The new Child and Family Support Agency

and the wider transformation of children's services represents one of the largest, and most ambitious, areas of public sector of reform embarked upon by this Government.

Question No. 198 answered with Question No. 190.

Child Poverty

199. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the degree to which lack of adequate housing and/or poverty is deemed to impact most particularly on children and adolescents; the extent to which it is anticipated such issues can be isolated and resolved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7582/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Tackling child poverty is a priority for Government and a goal of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007- 2016, coordinated by the Department of Social Protection. Children are more likely to be poor if they are living in lone parent households with low labour market participation and dependant on income support. The departments of Social Protection, Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and Education and Skills, are working to deliver a range of measures aimed at getting people back to work.

My Department works closely with the Department of Social Protection in a 'whole of Government approach' to tackling poverty in the population. The Department is represented on the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare established by the Minister for Social Protection to examine issues to do with the interactions of the tax and welfare systems so that they provide good incentives for parents to take up and remain in work and thereby contribute to the reduction of poverty and child poverty, in particular.

As Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, improving children's outcomes is my primary objective. The development of the Children and Young People's Policy Framework as the overarching framework under which policy and services for children and young people will be developed and implemented in the State, is an important initiative for cross departmental collaboration to secure this objective. Early childhood care and education programmes, in particular those that are aimed at low income families, are priorities to enhance children's opportunities for social and educational development and to support parents undertaking training and participating in employment. The network of 107 family resource centres that are funded by the Family Support Agency, under the remit of my Department have an important role in this regard.

The Programme for Government committed to reviewing the homeless strategy, *The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland 2008-2013*, and to implementing a housing led approach to homelessness. Work on the review is complete and I understand that my colleague the Minister for Housing & Planning, Jan O Sullivan TD intends to issue a policy statement on homelessness in the near future. That statement will take account of demands on existing housing and will assess how best to continue providing services in a manner consistent with the elimination of existing homelessness and to ensure more effective prevention strategies. I further understand that she will use the opportunity to indicate what she expects from housing authorities and other stakeholders in accelerating progress towards realising the ambition of eliminating long-term homelessness.

With regard to my own responsibility, my priority, as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, is to enhance the role of early intervention and support programmes for the most vulnerable children and their families in the context of the new Child and Family Support Agency. As announced in Budget 2013, the Government committed to an Area-based Approach to Child

Poverty Initiative, for which €2.5 million has been provided for in the 2013 Estimates.

This initiative will build on and continue the work of the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) which has supported projects in Tallaght, Ballymun and Darndale, co-funded by my Department and Atlantic Philanthropies. These projects involve a range of pilot programmes to improve outcomes in areas such as literacy, speech and language, parenting, health and pro-social behaviour and are currently being evaluated by national and international experts. It is important that we mainstream the learning from these pilot projects so that proven and effective supports for children and families can be delivered right through the country, including through the range of services to be provided by the new Child & Family Support Agency.

The new initiative reflects the Programme for Government commitment to adopt an area based approach to child poverty in co-operation with philanthropic partners, drawing upon best international practice and existing services, to break the cycle of child poverty where it is most deeply entrenched. In line with this commitment, my Department in conjunction with a number of Departments, including the Office of the Tánaiste and the Departments of Social Protection, Environment, Community and Local Government, and Education and Skills will work in 2013 to expand the number of project sites from 3 to 6. The new initiative will not simply be a continuation of the PEIP scheme but will instead seek to implement programmes which have already been evaluated and proven to work in improving outcomes for children and families at risk of disadvantage. It is envisaged that this initiative will be co-funded by a philanthropic organisation and discussions are ongoing to this end. It will not be possible in advance of the completion of these talks to know the final total funding levels including the co-funding component.

Question No. 200 answered with Question No. 190.

Aftercare Services

201. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to introduce a statutory right to aftercare for children leaving the care system. [7608/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will be aware that I am currently examining options, in association with the Attorney General, to strengthen legislation regarding the provision of aftercare. This matter is currently being progressed in my Department. The Deputy will also be aware that the HSE has provided information on aftercare to my Department to guide the development of policy to underpin the strengthening of legislation for services in this important area. The HSE responded to my Department at the end of November in relation to the key findings of the National Implementation Group and provided information on the current provision of aftercare, assessment of need, multi-agency working and the HSE policy regarding section 5 of the Child Care Act 1991, which provides that the HSE must take all reasonable steps to make suitable accommodation available to a child who is in need of accommodation.

The response of the HSE provides an important update on the significant progress in developing aftercare supports, the development of greater consistency nationally and the challenges in making supports available to individual young people, including the need for multi-agency cooperation and the need to take account of the views of those leaving care who, ultimately as young adults must wish to avail of the aftercare arrangements being made available. There have been improvements in the delivery of aftercare service and the issue is under ongoing active consideration by the National Implementation Group. My officials will continue to engage with

the HSE to ensure that the service is addressing the needs of these vulnerable young people.

Youth Services Provision

202. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will outline any initiatives she is undertaking to promote collective activities for young people of a social and recreational nature to reduce isolation and encourage social interaction and confidence building. [7620/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has a specific role in supporting the provision of youth services and facilities and promoting non-formal education and developmental opportunities for young people in out-of-school settings through which they can enhance their personal and social skills and competencies. Particular regard is had to the needs of young people between the ages of ten and 21 and to those who are socially or economically disadvantaged including early school-leavers, homeless young people and those who are unemployed or at risk of substance misuse. In particular, the Youth Affairs Unit of my Department provides targeted supports to disadvantaged, marginalised and at risk young people through the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund (Rounds 1 and 2) and Local Drugs Task Force Projects. Supports is also made available for all young people via the Youth Service Grant Scheme, Local Youth Club Grant Scheme, Youth Information Centres, European Youth in Action Programme (administered by Léargas – The Exchange Bureau) and Gaisce – the President’s Award. These measures aim to provide positive developmental opportunities for young people, to enhance their personal and social competencies, increase social inclusion and social integration and improve school attendance and engagement with formal education.

Funding of €53.173 million has been provided to my Department for the provision of youth services in 2013 and my Department is currently finalising the allocations for organisations and projects in 2013. In light of budgetary constraints, the emphasis in 2013 will be on supporting existing youth programmes and services for young people including those projects for young people with fewer opportunities. The funding budget of €53.173 million for 2013 includes €1.75 million for a new capital funding programme for 2013 that will provide €1.5 million for youth cafés and youth projects and €250,000 for the provision of play and recreation facilities. Criteria for the new programmes are being developed at present and my Department will be announcing details regarding the application process for 2013 shortly. My Department provides funding for a Local Youth Club Grant Scheme which supports youth work activities at a local level (€1.035 million in 2012). These grants are made available to all youth clubs and groups through local Vocational Education Committees. The allocation for this scheme will be notified to the VECs over the coming month and applications for funding will be subsequently invited by the VECs from local groups in their areas.

Foster Care Policy

203. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the manner in which checks are carried out by social workers to ensure that individuals nominated as referees for foster parent applicants are persons of good character and that they in fact themselves are in a position to provide references as to the good character of the applicant foster parents; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7648/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As this is a ser-

vice matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy with the most up-to-date information.

Crèche Facilities

204. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide details of any Health Service Executive correspondence with creche facilities in the Dublin north east area related to payment of subsidised creche places and any alterations to the funding arrangement for HSE places in local facilities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7689/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy with the most up-to-date information.

Hospital Waiting Lists

205. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a hospital appointment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7596/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Hospital Staff Issues

206. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health in view of the widespread concern among NCHDs, if he will request HIQA to investigate compliance with the EU Working Time Directive on the grounds of patient and doctor safety; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7600/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government is committed to achieving compliance with the European Working Time Directive in respect of non-consultant hospital doctors (NCHDs) by 2014. I have emphasised to the Health Service Executive the high priority the Government and I attach to this issue. In January 2012, a detailed plan for the achievement of compliance by NCHDs with the Working Time Directive was submitted to the EU Commission. The plan affirmed Ireland's commitment to achieving compliance with the Directive over a three-year time period i.e. by end 2014. It committed to implementing the measures necessary, including new work patterns for medical staff, transfer of work undertaken by NCHDs to other grades and the organisation of hospital services to support compliance. The HSE National Service Plan 2013 states that there will be a particular focus in the acute hospital service on the achievement of compliance with the European Working Time Directive amongst the non-consultant hospital doctor workforce. The Executive is currently finalising its National Operational Plan to support the implementation of the National Service Plan. This will specify in greater detail the actions to be taken in relation to EWTD compliance at hospital level.

The HSE was asked by my Department in January to ensure that clear responsibility is placed with a hospital CEO and a senior manager and/or clinical lead for the achievement of specified improvements in compliance, such that the end 2014 target will be met. The Minister

may give directions in writing to the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) under the Health Acts. However, the position is that HIQA wrote to the HSE on 24th January 2013 in relation to concerns that there may be risks to patients as a result of NCHDs working in excess of 48 hours per week. In the circumstances outlined, and in particular the measures in train to address compliance with the Directive, I do not intend to intervene as the Deputy suggests.

Hospital Staff Issues

207. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the actions he is taking to address concerns that there will be a shortage of medical intern places for both EU and non-EU graduates of Irish medical schools this year due to the increased number of students graduating; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7601/13]

221. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health the plans he has to increase the number of medical intern positions across hospitals here to take account of the increased number of medical undergraduates; if he will be bringing forward proposals for same shortly; if he will outline the actions that are being taken; if his attention has been drawn to the Second Interim Report on the Implementation of the Reform of the Intern Year which stated that maintaining the status quo seems least desirable in terms of lost educational investment, personal impact and loss of talent to the Irish health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7594/13]

222. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to deal with the significant increase in the number of medical school graduates for 2013 such that is anticipated that in July 2013 there will be a shortage of intern places for both EU and Non-EU graduates at Irish medical schools; if steps are being taken to implement the recommendations for an increase in intern posts as set out in the NCCMET Report; if he will outline the plans if any which are in place to deal with this important issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7597/13]

233. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm if the number of intern places for graduates of medical colleges here will be increasing in view of the fact that there has been an increase in the number of medical students in recent years in view of the immense benefit such intern places are to graduates for gaining valuable practical experience. [7669/13]

234. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Health in view of the increase in medical students-graduates, if the shortage of medical intern placement has been brought to his attention, which will have serious implications for medical graduates in the immediate years going forward; if he will have the matter examined to increasing the number of places available for students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7709/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 207, 221, 222, 233 and 234 together.

The issue of an adequate number of intern places in the Irish medical system is a priority for my Department and for the HSE. The HSE established an Intern Implementation Group in 2009 to implement aspects of the Report of the NCMET on the Intern Year and I am aware that this Group has issued two Implementation Reports, most recently in April 2012 (Second Interim Report). The intern year is an integral part of medical training, and a medical practitioner cannot be fully accredited without it. There were 572 posts available in Ireland for the July 2012 intern intake, an increase of almost 70 posts since 2007. To date, there have been suffi-

cient posts for all EU graduates from Irish medical schools, and a number of available posts for some non-EU applicants. My Department has been in regular contact with the HSE in relation to the issue of intern places, with the aim, in so far as is possible, to provide a sufficient number of intern places for Irish/EU graduates from Irish medical schools. In addition, under EU law, intern posts must be open to graduates from other EU countries and the HSE has no control over the numbers applying.

The application process for internships closed in November last, but the HSE will not know the final number of eligible applicants for some time. The final numbers that will proceed to the first round match have not yet been determined, as the overseas candidates must pass the entrance test, pass the HSE English language requirements, provide a Basic Life Support (BLS) certificate, and pass their final year medical exams. Candidates applying from within Ireland must provide a BLS certificate and pass their final year medical exams. This year the HSE will have approximately 80 additional posts available for interns commencing their training in July. In total, therefore, there will be in the region of 650 places available for 2013, and the HSE estimates that this will be sufficient to ensure that every EU graduate of the six Irish medical schools can access an internship.

Mental Health Services Provision

208. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health when the new acute mental health admissions unit in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin will be operational; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7474/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Mental Health Services Provision

209. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if he has looked at proposed changes to 16 and 17 year olds being seen by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services; if he is satisfied that this will have no detrimental impact on mental health services for children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [56766/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) were traditionally provided to children aged 0 - 15 years, and care and treatment of 16 and 17 year olds was the responsibility of the adult service. However, *A Vision for Change* recommended that CAMHS should be provided for all up to the age of 18 years. The implementation of *A Vision for Change* is a work in progress and transitional arrangements apply as the current CAMHS service is expanded to facilitate the provision of services to 16 and 17 year olds.

Last year, the HSE finalised “*Access Protocols for 16 and 17 year olds to Mental Health Services*” which came into effect from 1 January this year. In an effort to ensure that children are treated in an age appropriate manner, the new protocol provides that from 1 January 2013, CAMHS will accept referrals of all new cases of children up to their 17th birthday, and from 1 January 2014 referrals will be accepted for all new cases up to age 18.

The changes now being implemented nationally have been designed to improve overall the provision of services for the age groups raised by the Deputy.

Abortion Legislation

210. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he has received many representations in relation to the proposed legislation for abortion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2299/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy may realise, I have received a substantial number of representations on this issue since last December when the Government approved the implementation of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the *A, B and C v Ireland* case by way of legislation with regulations, within the parameters of Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court in the *X* case.

Abortion Legislation

211. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he has been asked to meet any of the Churches in relation to the forthcoming legislation on abortion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2392/13]

215. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if the forthcoming legislation and regulation on abortion in Ireland was discussed at his recent meeting with the Catholic Church bishops; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5094/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 211 and 215 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, I met with the Catholic Church Bishops as part of the delegation involved in the Church-State dialogue meeting led by An Taoiseach on 18th January. I can confirm that the issue of abortion and the Government's intention to implement the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the *A, B and C v Ireland* case by way of legislation with regulations, within the parameters of Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court in the *X* case were discussed in broad terms. In addition, the Deputy will be aware that three days of oral hearings on the subject were held from 8th to 10th of January this year by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children. The Committee heard contributions from a range of interested groups in public session, including representatives of churches and religious groups. On the 31st of January, the Committee furnished a report to the Government summarising the contributions received during the consultative process and this is being used by my officials in examining the issues involved and in formulating a legislative response that will stand up to public and parliamentary scrutiny. I have received no further requests to meet with any other churches.

Abortion Legislation

212. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health his plans to meet any group in relation to the forthcoming legislation on abortion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2393/13]

217. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he or his officials have been asked by any groups to meet them on the forthcoming legislation on abortion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5095/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 212 and 217

together.

The Deputy will be aware that the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children held three days of oral hearings on the implementation of the Government decision following the publication of the *Report of the Expert Group on the Judgment in A, B & C v Ireland*, from 8th to 10th of January this year. Officials from my Department attended to provide background, and the Committee heard contributions from a range of interested groups in public session, including experienced medical practitioners, legal experts, representatives of churches and religious groups, and advocacy groups. In addition, the Committee invited a wide range of stakeholders to make written submissions, and it also received 31 written submissions from groups and individuals of their own volition. On the 31st of January, the Committee furnished a report to the Government summarising the contributions received during the consultative process. This report is being used by my officials in examining the issues involved and in formulating a legislative response that will stand up to public and parliamentary scrutiny. The Government has committed to engage further with the Oireachtas Committee when Heads of a Bill have been developed.

I have received a number of requests for meetings and these are currently being processed by my officials.

Dental Services Provision

213. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health if the Dental Council has begun the process of provision of dental therapists in order to try to reduce the orthodontic waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7521/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Dental therapists are independent practitioners. In other jurisdictions, they would typically work in remote and isolated areas where there may not be access to a dentist. They have a broad scope of practice which includes restorations, periodontal treatment, oral hygiene treatment and extractions of deciduous teeth. Such independent practice is not permitted under the terms of the Dentists Act 1985. Accordingly, the Dental Council has not created a scheme establishing dental therapists as a class of auxiliary dental worker.

The Council created a Scheme in 2002 establishing orthodontic therapists as a class of auxiliary dental worker. They would typically work in orthodontic practices under the supervision of an orthodontist. To date there has been no registerable training programme approved in Ireland for orthodontic therapists. The Council has recently put in place a mechanism whereby dental nurses can undertake a UK qualification while doing their clinical training under the clinical supervision of Irish based orthodontists. There are currently 4 registered orthodontic therapists in Ireland and up to 10 others in training or undergoing adaptation placements. A HSE review of orthodontic services is underway. The outcome of this review will give guidance as to what changes will be desirable to provide the best model of care delivery, given current resources and expected future demand for services. It is anticipated that a report for consideration by the HSE and the Department of Health will be ready by the end of the 2nd Quarter of 2013.

Medical Card Eligibility

214. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to ensure that persons who can no longer afford health insurance and do not qualify for a medical card or general practitioner visit card may access the care they need when they need it; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [7526/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): There are currently two categories of eligibility for all persons ordinarily resident in Ireland - i.e. full eligibility (medical card) and limited eligibility (all others).

Persons with full eligibility (medical card holders) are entitled to a range of services free of charge, including GP services and all in-patient and out-patient public hospital services including consultant services. They are also entitled to prescribed drugs and medicines subject to a €1.50 charge per prescribed item (maximum €19.50 per month).

Persons with limited eligibility (non-medical card holders) are entitled, subject to certain charges, to all in-patient and out-patient public hospital services in public wards including consultants' services subject to certain charges. Persons with limited eligibility must meet the first €144 of prescribed drugs costs per month, above which the Drug Payments Scheme meets all further costs. The Programme for Government commits to reforming the current public health system by introducing Universal Health Insurance with equal access to care for all. As part of this, the Government is committed to introducing, on a phased basis, GP care without fees within its first term of office. Legislation to allow the Minister for Health to make regulations to extend access to GP services without fees to persons with prescribed illnesses is currently being drafted by the Office of the Attorney General and the Department and it will be published shortly. Implementation dates and application details will be announced in due course.

Question No. 215 answered with Question No. 211.

Suicide Prevention

216. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the measures his Department has in place to tackle suicide among young people; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7341/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Dealing with the current high levels of suicide and deliberate self harm is a priority for this Government. *Reach Out* our National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention recognises the youth sector as a high risk group and sets out a number of specific actions. Consequently, the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) has developed a range of initiatives aimed specifically at supporting young people who are suicidal and also supporting their peers in recognising and responding appropriately to signs of emotional distress and suicidal thoughts.

A wide range of awareness and training programmes are available in the area of mental health promotion and suicide prevention. These include SafeTALK which trains participants to become more alert to the possibility of suicide in their community and other training programmes such as Reaching Out, ASIST, Taking Control, MindOut and STOP.

A number of media awareness campaigns have been run in recent years including the *Let someone know* campaign which focused specifically on young people and delivered the message that it is important to reach out and seek the support of others. Other awareness programmes include the *The Please Talk* initiative, running in third level colleges since 2007, which encourages young people experiencing problems to talk to others and identifies the supports available to those in need.

Jigsaw, an innovative community-based support service for young people, has been developed by Headstrong and is designed to promote systems of care that are accessible, youth-

friendly, integrated, and engaging for young people. Through additional Innovation Funding, this service is now available or in development in 11 sites around the country.

Mindful that schools are one of the key settings for the promotion of mental health and well-being of young people and that they are also in the position to identify young people experiencing emotional difficulties, the NOSP has worked closely with the Department of Education and Skills to develop *Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention* in post-primary schools.

The annual budget for suicide prevention increased this year to over €13m, with €8.1m available to NOSP to fund voluntary and statutory agencies delivering services in the area of prevention, intervention, postvention and research and the remaining €5m available regionally to fund Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention, Self-Harm Liaison Nurses in Hospital Emergency Departments and local suicide prevention initiatives. The NOSP is currently working to integrate current programmes within the sector and to provide a strategic framework for the coordination of the extensive range of actions in this area.

Question No. 217 answered with Question No. 212.

Hospitals Funding

218. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide details of the budget allocations to each hospital in the State in 2013, and in each case the basis for the reduction or increase vis-à-vis the 2012 budget allocation. [7530/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Charges

219. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Health if he is concerned at reports of the fourfold increase in car parking charges at hospitals in the past two years to meet budget shortfalls. [7585/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Medicinal Products Supply

220. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 476 of 11 December 2012 and 1112 of 16 January 2013, when a reply will issue; the reason that, with regard to the former question, such a straightforward enquiry remains unanswered more than eight weeks after first being referred to the Health Service Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7593/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The company referred to by the Deputy is one of a number of companies engaged in the parallel importation of drugs and medicines into the State. There is disagreement between the companies and the HSE

with regard to the pricing of the products involved.

As this matter is currently the subject of litigation, I cannot comment any further.

Questions Nos. 221 and 222 answered with Question No. 207.

Speech and Language Therapy

223. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health the steps he will take to ensure that a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath, has a psychological assessment carried out and further that speech therapy will be afforded to this young person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7598/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

224. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Health if he will set out the circumstances in which the Health Service Executive withdrew the Alpha-Skrykep hip piece from use in the HSE southern region; the steps taken to provide redress and the support for patients who have suffered from this faulty product; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7613/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

225. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a hearing aid placement for a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7630/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The HSE Community Audiology service administers and monitors hearing tests for adults who are at risk of hearing loss. Appointments for the audiology service are sent in a strict chronology according to clinical priorities and date of receipt of referral. The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine the specific query raised by the Deputy and to reply to him as soon as possible.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

226. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the planned dates for the opening of four monitoring beds for epilepsy patients in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin and the opening of a two bed epilepsy monitoring unit in Cork University Hospital in consideration of the estimate spend of €900,000 to provide these units which are currently not available to treat epilepsy sufferers. [7646/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Cork and Beaumont are two of six regional centres which have been identified by the HSE's Clinical Care Programme for Epilepsy for the

provision of specialist epilepsy services. Developments so far under the Programme include the opening of Rapid Access Clinics at four of these centre, including Beaumont, St James's, Galway and Limerick. The Rapid Access clinics are led by Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs). Under the Programme, 10.5 (WTE) Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs) have been recruited to lead these clinics so that a total of 12 ANPs are now in place across the four centres, delivering services on site and on an outreach basis.

The two Epilepsy Monitoring Units (EMUs) planned for Cork and Beaumont under the Programme will increase pre-surgical evaluation capacity. Monitoring is required for those patients with the worst effects of epilepsy, and patients at these units will require 24/7 care.

The staffing requirements to enable the units to be safely opened have been identified. In regard to the planned EMU at Beaumont, I am advised that Beaumont Hospital and the HSE are working jointly to fill the posts necessary to support the service development. The recruitment of the necessary nursing personnel is a key element to facilitate phased opening of the unit, commencing Quarter 1, as nursing staff come into post. With regard to Cork, the HSE has advised that the Service Plan for 2013 for CUH is being drawn up currently and will be finalised in the coming weeks, and that the provision of additional staff for the Epilepsy Monitoring Unit is being considered as part of that process.

Medical Goods Regulation

227. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he plans to designate branded drugs to treat epilepsy, anti-epileptic drugs, as exempted drugs for generic substitution in the forthcoming health (pricing and supply of medical goods) Bill in view of the benefits for epilepsy sufferers of continuing to take the branded drugs that have been prescribed to them. [7647/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill, the Irish Medicines Board has statutory responsibility for establishing and publishing a List of Interchangeable Medicinal Products. In deciding whether to add a group of medicinal products to the List of Interchangeable Medicinal Products, the Board must be satisfied that each medicinal product which falls within the group: has the same qualitative and quantitative composition in each of its active substances as each of the other medicinal products which fall within the group; is in the same pharmaceutical form as, or in a pharmaceutical form that is appropriate for substitution for, each of the other products in the group; and has the same route of administration as each of the other medicinal products which fall within the group.

In addition, the Bill provides that the Board is not permitted to add a group of medicinal products to the List of Interchangeable Medicinal Products where: there is a difference in bio-availability between the medicinal products and the interchangeable medicinal products which currently fall within the group of interchangeable medicinal products which may lead to a clinically significant difference in efficacy between them; and any of the medicinal products cannot be safely substituted for any one or more of the other medicinal products in the group.

I would like to emphasise that in making a decision to add a medicinal product to a group of interchangeable medicinal products or a group of medicinal products to the List of Interchangeable Medicinal Products the Board is obliged to have regard to the criteria as set out in the Bill and that these criteria fully reflect the recommendations set out in the Joint Department of Health/HSE report 'Proposed Model of Reference Pricing and Generic Substitution' (the Moran Report, 2010) regarding criteria for interchangeability. To further enhance the patient

safety aspect of generic substitution, Section 13 of the Bill allows a prescriber to indicate on a prescription that a branded interchangeable medicinal product should, for clinical reasons, not be substituted.

I am satisfied that these provisions address the concerns raised by the Deputy. I met with the Irish Epilepsy Association in January and explained this position. It is also important to point out that generic medicines must meet exactly the same standards of quality and safety and have the same effect as the originator medicine. All of the generic medicines on the Irish market are required to be properly licensed and meet the requirements of the Irish Medicines Board.

Primary Care Centres Provision

228. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a progress report on the proposed primary care centre at Tullow, County Carlow. [7650/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Tullow/Rathvilly is one of the 35 potential locations for primary care centres for development by way of PPP as announced in the July 2012 Infrastructure Stimulus Package. Of the 35, approximately 20 will be offered to the market subject to a) agreement between the local GPs and the HSE on active local GP involvement in the centres and b) site suitability and availability. The HSE is currently analysing the available sites in each location and engaging with the GPs in each location to determine their interest in participating in the primary care centre development. While it is not possible, at this time, to give start and completion dates for any of the individual 20 potential locations, the best estimate is that these primary care centres will be completed by late 2016.

Health Services Provision

229. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will support the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [7656/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Provision

230. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will outline the staffing arrangements, facilities and the cutbacks in services that have been implemented at a location (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7658/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

HSE Planning

231. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he will outline when the Health Service Executive regional service plan for the north east will be published [7661/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): It is intended to publish the Health Service Executive's regional service plans by the end of February.

Hospitals Funding

232. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he will outline the way additional funds recently announced for the Louth Meath hospital group will be spent; and if he will provide a detailed breakdown of same [7662/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Questions Nos. 233 and 234 answered with Question No. 207.

Medical Card Eligibility

235. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health the way in which a person with significant health issues who held a discretionary medical card for several years could have had that card withdrawn in circumstances when his household income had in fact declined and his medical condition had not improved if in fact the guidelines for discretionary cards remain, as stated by him unchanged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7711/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Under the provisions of the Health Act 1970, medical cards are provided to persons who are, in the opinion of the Health Service Executive (HSE) unable without undue hardship to arrange GP services for themselves and their dependants. Assessment for a medical card is determined primarily by reference to the means, including the income and reasonable expenditure, of the applicant and his or her partner and dependants.

There is also provision for discretion by the HSE to grant a card in cases of “undue hardship” where the income guidelines are exceeded. Such cases are decided by a qualified Medical Officer. Medical expenses are taken into account when assessing an application on hardship grounds.

The HSE has produced national assessment guidelines to provide a clear framework to assist in the making of reasonable, consistent and equitable decisions when assessing an applicant for the General Medical Services scheme. These guidelines are publicly available and can be downloaded from the HSE’s medical card website.

If an individual is not satisfied with a decision made by the HSE concerning an entitlement to a medical card or GP visit card, a person has a right of appeal to the HSE Appeals Officer. An appeal must be lodged by the applicant within twenty-one days of the decision.

Medical Card Applications

236. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) was only awarded a general practitioners card on foot of an application for a medical card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7712/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Waiting Lists

237. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will supply in tabular format the number of persons awaiting for elective or planned procedures in hospitals here for less than three months, more than three and less than six months, more than six and less than nine months, more than nine and less than 12 months, more than 12 months, at the end of 2010, 2011 and 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7714/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In July 2011, I announced the establishment of the Special Delivery Unit as a key part of my plans to radically reform the health system in Ireland. The Unit's purpose is to improve access to the emergency and elective care system. Since it was established last year, it has been working to unblock public access to acute services by improving patient journeys through the system and by streamlining public hospital waiting lists, I am pleased to be able to say that very significant progress has been made by the SDU in relation to both emergency departments and waiting lists.

Scheduled care – in-patient and daycase. The initial focus for the SDU's Scheduled Care Team has been on waiting times for in-patient and daycase elective surgery. By the end of December 2012, the number of adults having to wait more than 9 months for inpatient and day case surgery was down to 86 from 3,706 in December 2011, a 98% decrease. The number of children waiting over 20 weeks for inpatient or daycase surgery was down to 89 from 1,759 in December 2011, a 95% decrease. The number of patients waiting over 13 weeks for a routine endoscopy procedure went down from 4,590 in December 2011 to 36 at the end of December 2012, a 99% decrease.

Outpatient services. Improving access to outpatient services is also a priority for the Government and for the SDU Scheduled Care Team. Building on work already undertaken by the HSE, the NTPF has now taken over the reporting of outpatient waiting time data. For the first time, clear and comprehensive data is available on www.ptr.ie. The data now being collected will allow the SDU and NTPF to target their resources towards those patients who are waiting longest and ensure that they are seen and assessed. A maximum waiting time target has now been set of 12 months for a first time outpatient appointment by 30 November 2013.

In the coming months, as winter pressures in Emergency Departments ease, the SDU will work towards re-balancing scheduled care to maintain the improvements seen in 2012 and to achieve the new 2013 target that no adult should be waiting > 8 months for in patient and day case surgery.

These significant improvements in access and experience are being achieved despite the economic and budgetary pressures which must be dealt with and managed. They reflect my commitment, and that of this Government, to ensuring patients can access the acute hospital services they need, when they need them

The HSE publishes monthly performance reports on their website. These reports include information on inpatient and daycase waiting lists for adults and children, broken down by hospital and region. The monthly performance reports can be accessed via this link:

<http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/corporate/performancereports>

The latest report available is for December 2012.

In relation to your request for data detailing the numbers of patients waiting for elective procedures over the last three years, I have forwarded your question to the HSE who will respond to you directly in this regard.

Hospital Services

238. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in the opening of the new emergency department at the Mater Hospital, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7736/13]

239. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or his Department have intervened in the matter of the failure of the new emergency department at the Mater Hospital, Dublin, to open; and if so, if he will provide details of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7737/13]

240. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that additional resources are provided to the Mater Hospital, Dublin, to allow them to opening the new emergency department; if so, if he will detail these resources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7738/13]

241. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a new date for the opening of the new emergency department at the Mater Hospital, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7739/13]

242. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that there is no interruption to the provision of emergency services to the inner city when the relocation of the emergency department at the Mater Hospital, Dublin, takes place unlike the previous scheduled closure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7740/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 238 to 242, inclusive, together.

The Special Delivery Unit (SDU), has been working closely with the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital (MMUH) on improving trolley waits and patient experience. The provision of a new Emergency Department, as well as a new Acute Medicine Unit, combined with the recruitment of additional consultants in Acute Medicine, represents a significant investment and is at the forefront of hospital's plan to address trolley waits and emergency department overcrowding through the increased presence of senior decision makers, enhanced clinical leadership, changing work practices and improved infrastructure.

The MMUH is undertaking the most significant transformative reform programme in its history. This includes the migration of a significant part of the existing clinical services (including a new Emergency Department and Acute Medical Unit) to a new building, the implementation of the national clinical care programmes and other internal reforms that will enable the hospital to meet existing challenges in terms of changing medical practice and lay the foundations for a sustainable future. Many of these changes have regional significance and are reflective of a change in the wider health economy.

I understand that the Executive management team in MMUH have been working with all relevant stakeholders in the region (hospitals, GPs, Gardai, Ambulance service) to ensure a robust plan is in place to give effect to the Emergency Department move which is now scheduled to take place next Sunday, 17th February 2013. A move of this magnitude of necessity involves careful and prudent planning to minimise disruption. The Special Delivery Unit has been working closely with MMUH and the region (which includes the network of hospitals) to give effect to the transition to the new Emergency Department. These changes will allow for a much enhanced infrastructure to support the delivery of more efficient and effective care for patients presenting at the hospital .

Medical Card Applications

243. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7755/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Driving Licence Issues

244. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if, people who have been driving for more than 35 years, who are accident free and have no endorsements, have never made a court appearance with regard to road related issues and who are not in possession of a full driver's licence, should be provided with a full licence and classified as a special case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7756/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Driver licensing law in Ireland operates within the overall framework of EU legislation on driver licensing. The purpose of both EU and Irish law in this regard is ultimately to promote safety on our roads. Experience is a vital component in good driving, but it is also essential that we have measurable standards against which we can assess the level of knowledge and skills attained by drivers. This is why the driving test is and will remain an essential component of the driver licensing regime.

We are in the process of introducing a Graduated Driver Licensing System, with many of the elements already in place and which are aimed at strengthening the driver learning process. It would be a retrograde step if we were to make exceptions for any particular group of drivers, whatever their current licence status, and I do not propose to do so. The creation of one special case, as envisaged in the Deputy's question, would in itself undermine the driver licensing regime and it would lead to many other claims for special status in relation to driver licensing.

Therefore, while there may well be individuals caught in circumstances with which I would sympathise, I cannot make exceptions for anyone.

Air Services Provision

245. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the efforts that have been made to assist Waterford Airport replace the loss of Aer Arann services to London and Manchester since the start of 2013. [7586/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): It is the responsibility of airports (be they State airports or regional airports) to secure routes and negotiate deals with airlines. As such, it is a commercial matter for the airports and airlines themselves and not a matter in which I have any function. However, Tourism Ireland work closely with airports and airlines on developing new routes to drive demand for air services from key overseas markets and to help maintain our vital route network. This work is undertaken having regard to state aid rules and the need to ensure that we do not distort competition between airports.

I understand from Waterford Airport that since the withdrawal of Aer Lingus Regional ser-

vices by Aer Arann in January, it has continued to service Flybe services between Waterford and Birmingham (with single transaction bookings to and from European and UK destinations via Birmingham) as well as providing a base for the Irish Coast Guard Search & Rescue service and servicing a range of general aviation activity.

I know that Waterford Airport is also continuing to work to replace the Aer Lingus Regional services that were withdrawn and the airport is confident that the London route in particular is an attractive opportunity for an airline with strong usage both inbound and outbound with high yields due to a high proportion of business usage.

Waterford Airport has received and continues to receive significant Exchequer support under the Irish Government's Regional Airports Capital Expenditure Grant (Capex) scheme and the Operational expenditure subvention (Opex) scheme. Over the past six years (2007 to 2012), around €14m has been provided to Waterford Airport by the State under these two schemes and the airport continues to be supported under these schemes in 2013.

Road Tolls

246. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will outline the impact on both the Exchequer and private highway operators of reduced traffic volumes on tolled sections of the national road network; his views that high traffic volumes on these sections are preferable, from a financial standpoint, to both the Exchequer and private highway operators; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7619/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The implementation of individual national road schemes, including Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects, is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2007.

In addition, the statutory power to levy tolls on national roads, to make toll bye-laws and to enter into toll agreements with private investors in respect of national roads is vested in the NRA under Part V of the Roads Act (as amended). The contracts for the privately-operated toll schemes are, therefore, commercial agreements between the NRA and the PPP concessionaires concerned.

Two PPP contracts, the M3 Clonee-Kells PPP and the Limerick Tunnel PPP, incorporate a traffic guarantee mechanism. With regard to the remaining PPP schemes, all traffic risk remains with the operator while the State stands to benefit from a revenue share arrangement in the contracts where the average daily traffic ("ADT") exceeds scheme specific pre-defined threshold traffic.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for further reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Safety Issues

247. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the working group that has been established to review speed limits has received any representation from civic society and community groups, for example, cyclist or pedestrian groups and road safety campaigners; if not, the reason; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[7643/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In 2012, I announced that a review of speed limits would be undertaken and, to that end, my Department established a stakeholders group to progress this work. Representatives of the Automobile Association, An Garda Síochána, the Road Safety Authority, local authorities and the National Transport Authority accepted my invitation to participate in the stakeholders group, which has met on a number of occasions since its formation.

I understand that the stakeholders group is finalising its report at present. When I receive the report I will be in a position to confirm for the Deputy if any representations were submitted.

Pension Provisions

248. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons that are on State pensions who have worked in semi-State companies under his Department and are in pension brackets/bands of between €50,000 and €60,000, between €60,000 and €70,000, between €70,000 and €80,000, between €80,000 and €90,000, between €90,000 and €100,000 and more than €100,000 [7668/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The information requested by the Deputy is a matter for the bodies under the aegis of my Department.

I have asked them to provide the Deputy with the information. If you do not receive a reply from the agencies within 10 workings days please advise my private office.

