

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 10, inclusive, answered orally.

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

11. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Naas General Hospital, County Kildare, and the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7551/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In Naas General Hospital the first five weeks of 2013, compared to same period in 2011, there has been a 52% decrease in the number of patients waiting on trolleys., i.e., the number of patients on trolleys has more than halved.

Immediately following my appointment, I set out to address the issues which have been causing unacceptable delays in patients being treated in our hospitals. I established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), as set out in the Programme for Government. The SDU is working closely with hospitals to unblock access to acute services by improving the flow of patients through the system. Since its establishment, there have been significant improvements in waiting times for unscheduled care, against a background of reduced funding for health, reconfiguration of services, a very challenging socio-economic climate, a growing number of older people and an overall increase in life expectancy.

Hospital Acquired Infections

12. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health his response to the recent Health Information and Quality report that indicates that patients are at severe risk of infection in six hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7502/13]

39. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle MRSA in hospitals; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7545/13]

343. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health the current preventative measures taken by hospitals to limit the spread of hospital acquired infections; if the regulatory regime could be strengthened to incorporate the monitoring of private hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7955/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 12, 39 and

343 together.

I am pleased to inform the Deputies that MRSA rates are at a 6-year low and would like to assure the Deputy that the management of Healthcare Acquired Infections (HCAIs) including MRSA is a key patient safety issue for my Department and the Health Service Executive (HSE) and a number of significant initiatives have been developed to address that important public health issue. These include the HSE's National Infection Control Plan which was launched in March 2007. A National Surveillance System was also established by the HSE to collect data and provide information to monitor HCAIs in our health system along with the establishment of the Clinical Care Programme for HCAIs.

In relation to the recent Health Information and Quality Authority's (HIQA) Reports my Department and the HSE recognise that the HIQA inspection of hospitals against the National Infection Prevention and Control Standards is an important element of the overall strategy to reduce HCAIs across healthcare in Ireland. I welcome the positive comments on the 14 Hospitals inspected. Likewise, both my Department and the HSE recognise that improvement is still necessary in some areas.

With regard to hand hygiene the findings of the Authority would suggest that a culture of hand hygiene best practice needs to become more operationally embedded at all levels. I wish to emphasise that it is of vital importance that healthcare workers recognise their personal responsibility to protect patients by maintaining their own hand hygiene.

To date the HSE has published three national audits on hand hygiene practices with a fourth due in the next six to eight weeks. These reports have shown a level of hand hygiene improving from 78% to 82% against a national target of 90% by the end of 2013. To improve hand hygiene a series of actions are in place a key element of which is the continuing hand hygiene audits. These are happening both in the acute sector and in the long stay area as well.

Other actions include:

- the existing 2005 guidelines on hand hygiene are being revised and will be published this year
- a hand hygiene e-learning programme is being piloted in Dublin North East
- a training video for staff on the WHO 5 Moments for hand hygiene concept
- revised hand hygiene posters were introduced across the system in the summer of 2012
- a major section on website on hand hygiene
- in collaboration with the Department of Education an educational programme for schools
- E-Bug
- a monthly national HCA implementation group monitors and reviews all HCA activity in the health system.

All 12 hospitals audited by HIQA are now being asked to develop quality improvement plans that prioritise changes necessary to fully meet the National Standards for the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections. These plans must be published by the hospitals concerned on the Internet within six weeks of the publication of HIQA's reports.

All hospitals will receive a letter shortly indicating general outcomes of HIQA investigations and lessons to be learnt.

With regard to the prevention of the spread of MRSA it should be noted that the number of cases of MRSA has fallen by 55% between 2006 and 2011 (from 592 to 263 cases) and the downward trend is holding per statistical returns to date. Individual hospital MRSA rates are also collected and published – annually for 2006 and 2007 and quarterly from 2008 onwards. These results provide a good benchmark into the future to enable us to measure effectively the progress of each hospital on their performance in infection prevention and control. The data can be used by individual hospitals to monitor their progress in the control of HCAs and the regular reports allow for public assessment of that progress.

Finally, officials of my Department are currently working on the Licensing of Health Facilities Bill which will provide for a mandatory system of licensing for public and private health service providers. The legislative proposals are being prepared broadly in line with recommendations made in the Report of the Commission on Patient Safety and Quality Assurance and are designed to improve patient safety by ensuring that healthcare providers do not operate below core standards which are applied in a consistent and systematic way. The intention is to have a proportionate system which has the confidence of the public. Standards and other requirements will be enforceable through inspection and imposition of sanctions as necessary. Licensing will be targeted at areas which are not currently subject to regulation. It is expected that outline proposals for the new system of licensing should be finalised in the near future.

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

13. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Sligo General Hospital; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7567/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In Sligo General Hospital in the first five weeks of 2013, compared to same period in 2011, there has been a 65% decrease in the number of patients waiting on trolleys at the hospital. Immediately following my appointment, I set out to address the issues which have been causing unacceptable delays in patients being treated in our hospitals. I established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), as set out in the Programme for Government. The SDU is working to unblock access to acute services by improving the flow of patients through the system. Since its establishment there has been significant improvements in the waiting times for unscheduled care against a background of reduced funding for health, reconfiguration of services, a very challenging socio-economic climate and a growing number of older persons with an overall increase in life expectancy.

There was significant progress during the course of 2012 in reducing the number of patients waiting on trolleys. Over 2012 there were 20,352 less patients waiting on trolleys in comparison to 2011, representing an overall reduction of 23.6%.

With particular regard to Sligo General Hospital, the SDU is satisfied that the hospital is engaged in ensuring that emergency patients are seen in a timely manner, focussing on working to achieve the national targets for unscheduled care. Specific measures taken have included the opening of a 15 bedded *Medical Short Stay Unit* adjacent to the Emergency Department and the Acute Assessment Unit. This ward has had the impact of improving the streaming of medical patients throughout the hospital as well as a continued reduction of patients accommodated on trolleys overnight.

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

14. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Mid-Western Regional Hospital, County Limerick; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7570/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In the Mid Western Regional Hospital in the first five weeks of 2013, compared to same period in 2011, there has been a 9% decrease in the number of patients waiting on trolleys. Immediately following my appointment, I set out to address the issues which have been causing unacceptable delays in patients being treated in our hospitals. I established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), as set out in the Programme for Government. The SDU is working to unblock access to acute services by improving the flow of patients through the system. Since its establishment there has been significant improvements in the waiting times for unscheduled care against a background of reduced funding for health, reconfiguration of services, a very challenging socio-economic climate and a growing number of older persons with an overall increase in life expectancy.

There was significant progress during the course of 2012 in reducing the number of patients waiting on trolleys. Over 2012 there were 20,352 less patients waiting on trolleys in comparison to 2011, representing an overall reduction of 23.6%.

With particular regard to the Mid-Western Regional Hospital, the SDU is satisfied that the hospital is engaged in ensuring that emergency patients are seen in a timely manner, focussing on working to achieve the national targets for unscheduled care. The opening of an Acute Medical Unit in the hospital as well as Medical Assessment Units at St John's and the Mid-Western Regional Hospital Nenagh have alleviated the pressures on the Emergency Department by enabling Medical Physicians to take direct referrals from GPs. Other measures planned include converting some in-patient beds to medical short stay beds. By grouping these patients together under the care of Acute Medical Physicians it is hoped to increase the number of medical discharges within 48 hours, thus freeing up capacity.

General Practitioner Services

15. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the progress that has been made on securing a new general practitioner contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7499/13]

320. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health the date on which he intends to engage in discussions with the Irish Medical Organisation to examine reform of primary care services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7820/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 15 and 320 together.

The Programme for Government provides for the introduction of a new General Medical Services (GMS) General Practitioner (GP) contract with an increased emphasis on the management of chronic conditions, such as diabetes and cardiovascular conditions. It is envisaged that the new contract, when finalised, will focus on prevention and will include a requirement for GPs to provide care as part of integrated multidisciplinary Primary Care Teams.

The Department and the HSE are currently examining the changes that need to be made to the GMS contract to facilitate the introduction of Universal Primary Care. There have been discussions with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Competition Authority with regard to Competition Law.

I have recently had discussions with the Irish Medical Organisation (IMO) during which I outlined our policy in relation to free GP care. I would expect to engage in further discussions with the IMO as the legislation progresses.

Medicinal Products Supply

16. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason asthma sufferers' access to medication is subject to significant geographical variation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7481/13]

76. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the reason there continues to be geographical inequity of access to omalizumab and xolair medication, with asthma sufferers in the Health Service Executive south region particularly disadvantaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7482/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 16 and 76 together.

Xolair (Omalizumab) is indicated as additional therapy for the prophylaxis of severe persistent allergic asthma in patients who cannot be controlled with the standard treatments.

This medicine is being prescribed nationally. This is administered in a hospital setting by a health care professional, namely a nurse, under the care of a consultant.

In relation to Cork University Hospital (CUH) I have been advised by the HSE that there is a Drugs and Therapeutics Committee in CUH whose primary objective is to assist the Executive Management Board (EMB) and hospital management in:

- (i) The formulation of policies for safe and cost effective prescribing.
- (ii) Supporting the process of managing the hospital's drugs budget.

This committee has not recommended the use of these drugs to the EMB at CUH. Following the recent submission of a business case for the use of these medicines, it is being proposed that the newly appointed Clinical Director for Medicine, would meet with the consultants involved to further discuss their business case with a view to bringing a recommendation on this matter to the Acute Hospital Manager Group if required. For additional information please see below link for the Asthma Programme which may be of some assistance. <http://www.hse.ie/eng/about/Who/clinical/natclinprog/asthmaprog.html>

HSE Planning

17. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health when the Health Service Executive Regional plans will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7455/13]

56. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Health when the Health Service Executive implementation plan will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7456/13]

353. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a breakdown of the Health Service Executive budget in 2012 on a regional basis and the allocation for 2013 for each HSE region; if he will outline the additional moneys being allocated in

each HSE region in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8002/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 17, 56 and 353 together.

Details of the 2012 budget on a regional basis are available in the HSE's regional plans which can be found on their website. Outturn figures for 2012 will be finalised in the HSE's Appropriation Account at the end of March. 2013 allocations will be available in the 2013 regional plans which are expected to be published by the end of February in parallel with the Operational Plan.

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

18. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in St. James's Hospital, Dublin; and the impact of these measures. [7561/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In St. James' Hospital in the first five weeks of 2013, compared to same period in 2011, there has been a 13% decrease in the number of patients waiting on trolleys.

Immediately following my appointment, I set out to address the issues which have been causing unacceptable delays in patients being treated in our hospitals. I established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), as set out in the Programme for Government. The SDU is working closely with hospitals to unblock access to acute services by improving the flow of patients through the system. Since its establishment, there have been significant improvements in waiting times for unscheduled care, against a background of reduced funding for health, reconfiguration of services, a very challenging socio-economic climate, a growing number of older people and an overall increase in life expectancy.

In December 2012, there were 20,352 fewer patients waiting on trolleys in comparison to December 2011, representing an overall reduction of 23.6%. However, the overall progress made has to be secured and continually improved upon, and the SDU continues to engage at all levels with hospitals to do this. The work of the SDU with executive management teams in hospitals (CEOs, Directors Of Nursing and Clinical Directors) has seen local leaders and experts driving the change required to reduce the numbers of patients waiting on trolleys and improve standards for patients.

Another major contributing factor in reducing waiting times has been the implementation of new clinical care pathways, based on international clinical evidence, which has enabled improved planning of services to ensure optimal resource utilisation. An escalation protocol has been introduced by SDU liaison officers to assist with hospitals which are experiencing particular difficulties. This involves conference calls between key decision makers to review the situation and agree actions. This usually includes Directors of Performance, Directors of Un-scheduled and Scheduled Care, the National Clinical Director, the National Director of Clinical Programmes and senior HSE managers, including all HSE Regional Directors.

Key actions agreed during this conference may include:

- Opening of additional capacity in the hospital;
- Ensuring the presence of senior clinical decision makers to maximise patient discharges from occupied beds;

- Utilising available capacity in residential facilities for approved patients;
- Consideration of adjustments to elective (scheduled) care in the short term.

The SDU has therefore planned well for the possibility of surges in demand in ED-related hospital services and the better management of the surges has mitigated their impact. The system has been clearly responsive in the way this has been done. It is very heartening to see the level of commitment and actions that have been taken to cope with very difficult winter circumstances.

There are consistent reports of high attendances at emergency departments at present, with increasing numbers of frail elderly presenting with acute viral and respiratory-related illness. Clinical Directors across the country have reported that all staff, including consultants, nurses, allied health staff and management have been working extremely hard to address these pressures. These exceptional efforts will continue but the nature of many of the patients is such that they require extended inpatient care, which is resulting in additional trolley waits in emergency departments. The SDU has been in constant contact with regional management teams, the National Clinical Directors and National Leads for Clinical Programmes. The situation is being actively managed at a national level and in addition, small teams of SDU staff are visiting key hospitals to ensure that all possible actions to ameliorate the present situation are being implemented. The impact of these measures is seen in the reduction of numbers of patients on trolleys during the day. The objective of the measures being implemented at hospital level and by the HSE is to continue to manage the downward trend on the number of patients waiting until the system stabilises.

Trolley figures in hospitals are managed a number of times a day through an internal counting system known as TrolleyGAR – which refers to the trolley count and alert levels: green for within acceptable limits, amber for approaching acceptable maximum limits and red for above acceptable maximum limits. These counts take place at 8am, 2pm and 8pm each day.

With specific reference to St James' Hospital, the hospital has advised that they have robust internal controls and processes in place to ensure that Emergency Department volumes and wait times are managed consistently and appropriately. The hospital has also advised that it constantly seeks to deliver improvements in terms of Emergency Department access and overall patient experience. The figures from 18 January 2013 to 11 February 2013 (25 days, 75 counts) show red for only 21 counts, red for all three daily counts on only one occasion and one day with green for all counts. The hospital has invoked its escalation procedures in response to the ED demand surge. It has opened additional beds and is working with the HSE on accelerated discharge of patients to home care and long term stay. The monitoring of numbers of people on trolleys in St James's will continue.

Primary Care Centres Provision

19. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health if provision for community kitchen facilities to be utilised by community groups and non-governmental organisations can be incorporated into the construction of Corduff primary care centre in Dublin 15, which is included in the Health Service Executive capital spending plan. [7069/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): There are no plans to include community kitchen facilities in the proposed Corduff primary care centre. However the usual facilities will be provided for staff working in the facility.

Graduate Nursing Scheme Issues

20. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health the savings he would expect to make from the graduate nurse recruitment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7489/13]

35. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Health if he will discontinue the graduate nurse recruitment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7507/13]

49. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the services he will cut in the event of the graduate nurse recruitment scheme not being taken up; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7515/13]

346. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the action he proposes to take to ensure the recruitment of 1,000 directly employed nurses in 2013 in view of the very low take up of his graduate nurses scheme. [7973/13]

347. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the total average monthly cost of an agency nurse, and the reason he will not recruit graduate nurses on the standard pay-scale [7974/13]

359. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of student nurses likely to be offered employment in the context of the recently announced initiative in this regard; when the posts are likely to be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8034/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 20, 35, 49, 346, 347 and 359 together.

The recruitment of graduate nurses under this scheme, which is currently in train, will continue. The HSE will accept applications on an ongoing basis for Phase 1, covering registered general nurses for the acute hospital setting and the community, from 2012 graduates and also those who graduated in 2010 and 2011. Further recruitment will continue during 2013. Phase 2, which will cover Mental Health, Intellectual Disability, Midwifery and Paediatrics, will launch in the coming days. There will also be opportunities for those who graduate in 2013 to participate in due course. The scheme was introduced on the assumption that intake would be spread over a period, especially since the scheme was being introduced some months after most 2012 graduates completed their training.

The initiative will give nursing and midwifery graduates an employment opportunity and facilitate their professional development. They will be able to avail of a suite of educational programmes including intravenous cannulation and training in anaphylaxis treatment. It has also been agreed that participants will be facilitated in obtaining a certificate in advanced healthcare skills to cover areas such as health assessment and pharmacology.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform approved this employment initiative on the basis that participants would not be counted in health service staff numbers and that it would contribute to savings on unsustainable levels of agency and overtime expenditure. The HSE's National Service Plan for 2013 provides for a saving of €10m in the current year, arising from the introduction of this scheme. This level of saving will need to be achieved regardless of uptake. Based on the fifth point of the staff nurse salary scale, the average monthly cost to the health service of an agency nurse is approximately €5,000 including administration costs, VAT, PRSI and allowances. Given the requirement on the HSE to reduce numbers employed and to maximise savings, there is only very limited scope to offer permanent nursing posts at present.

The graduate nurse/midwife scheme represents an opportunity for a substantial number of recently-qualified nurses and midwives to work in Ireland for a two-year period and to gain valuable experience and additional skills at a time when job opportunities in the public service are, regrettably, very limited. Graduate nurses and midwives are of course entitled to choose whether to participate in the initiative or to pursue their careers elsewhere but I would hope to see a steady increase in applicants over the coming months. I consider that the boycott of the scheme by the nursing representative bodies is ill-judged and I would ask them to reconsider their opposition to this measure.

Traveller Community Issues

21. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Health in view of the appalling health profile of Travellers evident in the all-Ireland Traveller health study report published in 2010, when he will develop an action plan-update the national Traveller health strategy to address Traveller health inequalities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7457/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The All Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS) was carried out in 2007 and the findings were published in September 2010 with a follow up Birth Cohort Study published in September 2011. It was a comprehensive study of the health and social status of the Traveller community in Ireland and was carried out by the School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Population Science, University College Dublin on behalf of Travellers, with the direct involvement of Travellers. The findings of the Study provide a strong evidence base for assessing existing and future service delivery and allowed the identification of a range of priorities and means of addressing these.

The following priority areas for action were identified to address the findings of the Study:

- Mental Health;
- Suicide;
- Men's Health;
- Addiction/Alcohol;
- Domestic Violence;
- Diabetes;
- Cardiovascular Health.

The HSE have already put in place measures to address these agreed priority areas and the Traveller Health Advisory Forum within the HSE is in the process of preparing a detailed action plan. In addition, the forthcoming Health and Wellbeing Framework will put in place new structures which will focus on the cross sectoral social determinants of health and will incorporate actions relating to addressing health inequalities among marginalised groups such as Travellers.

Garda Vetting of Personnel

22. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Health if he will detail the efforts he has made and if he will make to ensure prompt processing of Garda vetting applications, with

particular reference to those of potential staff members at health care facilities; the contact he has had with the Department of Justice and Equality, in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7450/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Garda vetting of relevant health service staff has my full support. While Garda vetting is a matter for employers in the first instance, I am not aware of excessive delays in relation to the vetting of potential staff members.

It is the case that the vetting of potential staff can extend the duration of the appointment process, particularly at times when a significant volume of clearances may be required. I am of the view, however, that it is essential that the vetting process is not compromised. Officials in my Department had contact with officials of the Department of Justice and Equality last year in relation to the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012. This, however, was not connected to the issue raised by the Deputy.

Hospitals Building Programme

23. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the communications he had with the Health Service Executive in relation to building projects at Wexford General Hospital and at St. Luke's Hospital, Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7447/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The method and timescale for the delivery of health care infrastructure is a dynamic process which is constantly evolving to take account of changing circumstances, including the feasibility of implementation. There will always be more construction projects than can be funded by the Exchequer and the Health Service Executive must prioritise infrastructure projects within its overall capital envelope.

I requested that the HSE accelerate the projects in both Wexford and in Kilkenny and for very good reasons. At Wexford General Hospital the admissions lounge is in a portakabin-style building, as is the medical assessment unit at St Luke's Hospital Kilkenny.

The new Wexford project comprises an emergency department, a maternity delivery suite and theatre and the necessary equipping. A main entrance / new concourse will also be provided. The project is under construction and is making good progress. It is expected to be completed and operational in mid to late 2014.

The new Kilkenny project comprises an emergency department, a medical assessment unit and a day services unit including endoscopy. Construction commenced in 2012 and the project is expected to be completed and operational in mid to late 2014.

Both projects were approved for inclusion in the HSE capital programme in 2008 and have been included in all of the HSE's multi-annual Capital Plans since then.

My decisions fully supported the Government priority which is to improve conditions for patients and reduce overcrowding in Emergency Departments through the delivery of improved accommodation including medical assessment units.

As you will be aware, one of the concerns over many years has been capacity issues in the Emergency Departments. Since 2006 capital funding has been made available for an A&E Initiative to provide a series of admission lounges and medical assessment units in order to relieve pressure on A&E departments. Continuing to address these capacity issues has always been a fundamental aspect of HSE's Capital Plans. The 2008 Capital Plan contained funding to

complete developments underway, deliver new A&Es and to upgrade and extend existing departments. The Wexford and Kilkenny projects were part of this initiative to address capacity.

Following the 2009 Budget and Supplementary Budget the HSE's capital allocation was reduced by about 32%. As a consequence, certain projects were paused or deferred. Those projects which were in construction or at the equipping stage were completed, whereas those which were at earlier stages of development such as appraisal or design were paused / deferred once those stages were completed. The projects deferred included the Wexford and St Luke's Kilkenny projects.

Both projects had advanced sufficiently by 2011 which enabled me to make my decision to accelerate them. Planning permission was in place and both had undergone the design phase. No projects were delayed, held or omitted from the capital programme to accommodate these projects.

I was delighted to receive an additional €12 million from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in order to expedite the sorely needed facility in Wexford General Hospital. Given that savings were achieved in the construction area due to reduced costs associated with the economic downturn it was also possible to expedite the St Luke's project.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform sanctioned the 2011 Capital Plan which included these much needed projects.

Medical Products

24. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the concerns specific to people with epilepsy regarding the implications for their medication of generic substitution, including scientific evidence of the need for absolute precision in dosage and format of drugs for use in case of seizures; if he will address these concerns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7471/13]

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:

(a) 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;

(b) 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

(c) 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 bioavailability 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.

Hospital Staff Issues

25. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Health the measures he will take to address excessive working hours and issues of appropriate training and supervision and career progression opportunities for non-consultant hospital doctors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7451/13]

41. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the measures in place within the health services to ensure that the EU working time directive is being complied with; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7490/13]

82. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health the way he plans to reduce the burden on non-consultant hospital doctors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7501/13]

88. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the action he proposes to take about junior hospital doctors working shifts of unsafe duration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7509/13]

97. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to deal with the excessive hours worked by junior doctors, with particular reference to addressing 36 hour shifts as a critical issue of health and safety. [7440/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 25, 41, 82, 88 and 97 together.

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. It com-

mitted 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. 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.

As part of the measures agreed between health service management and the consultant representative bodies at the Labour Relations Commission in September 2012, consultants have a key role in supporting the implementation of required revisions to NCHD work patterns and working hours. These include ward-based rostering, use of cross cover at SHO level, replacement of NCHD hours by Advanced Nurse/Midwifery Practitioner hours where appropriate, transfer of certain duties to other staff and other measures set out in Ireland's 2012 Plan to drive EWTD compliance.

I want to ensure that NCHDs can progress to consultant level. However, it is not sustainable, in the light of the State's serious financial difficulties, to continue to recruit at the previous rates. If we are to continue to provide consultant-level career opportunities for doctors and, subject to the limitations on available resources, to replace consultants who retire and where possible expand overall capacity, this can only happen on the basis of a lower-cost model.

Written Answers Nos. 26-43

Accident and Emergency Departments Waiting Times

26. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Ennis, County Clare, and the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7560/13]

30. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Connolly Hospital, Dublin; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7568/13]

40. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in University College Hospital Galway, County Galway, and the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7555/13]

44. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Letterkenny Hospital, County Donegal; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7566/13]

45. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Tallaght Hospital, Dublin; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7549/13]

46. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in St. Colmcille's Hospital, Loughlinstown, Dublin; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7569/13]

47. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin; and the impact of these measures [7562/13]

58. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in St. Luke's Hospital, Kilkenny, and the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7556/13]

66. **Deputy Dara Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Cork University Hospital, County Cork, and the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7554/13]

70. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, County Louth; and the impact of these measures [7565/13]

75. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Our Lady's Hospital, Navan, County Meath, and the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7552/13]

77. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Cavan General Hospital, County Cavan, and the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7553/13]

86. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Midland Regional Hospital, Tullamore, County Offaly and the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7557/13]

89. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Portiuncula Hospital, County Galway; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7563/13]

93. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in St. Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin, and the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7558/13]

94. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Kerry General Hospital; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7564/13]

96. **Deputy Liam Twomey** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident emergency department in Wexford General Hospital; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7547/13]

99. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Midland Regional Hospital, Mullingar, County Westmeath, and the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7559/13]

104. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Naas General Hospital, County Kildare; and the impact of these measures [7550/13]

112. **Deputy Charles Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in the accident and emergency department in Midland Regional Hospital, Portlaoise, County Laois; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7548/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 26, 30, 40, 44 to 47, inclusive, 58, 66, 70, 75, 77, 86, 89, 93, 94, 96, 99, 104 and 112 together.

Immediately following my appointment, I set out to address the issues which have been causing unacceptable delays in patients being treated in our hospitals. I established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), as set out in the Programme for Government. The SDU is working to unblock access to acute services by improving the flow of patients through the system. Since its establishment there has been significant improvements in the waiting times for unscheduled care against a background of reduced funding for health, reconfiguration of services, a very challenging socio-economic climate and a growing number of older persons with an overall increase in life expectancy.

There was significant progress during the course of 2012 in reducing the number of patients waiting on trolleys. Over 2012 there were 20,352 less patients waiting on trolleys in comparison to 2011, representing an overall reduction of 23.6%.

Since before Christmas hospitals have seen a significant increase in the number of very sick patients needing admission. The increase in norovirus in hospitals has been well publicised; we are also seeing high levels of admissions of frail elderly people, patients presenting with respiratory illness and of patients presenting with fractures.

However, evidence from the last year, and particularly over the last ten months, has proved that the health system has the capacity to respond to these challenges more quickly and is better at managing increased demand.

The situation is being actively managed at a national level with an intensive work programme having begun between the SDU's liaison officers, the Clinical Programmes and the hospital teams. The SDU is satisfied that hospitals are engaged in ensuring that emergency patients are seen in a timely manner, focussing on working to achieve the national targets for unscheduled care.

I will have the information requested on each hospital sent out to the Deputies as soon as possible.

27. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the products that will be delisted from the GMS scheme as outlined in the Health Service Executive national service plan 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7460/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): A Clinician Led Multi-disciplinary Medicines Management Programme has been established to provide national leadership on issues relating to quality of medicines management processes, access to medicines and cost of medicines. As part of this work, those products that are less suitable for prescribing will be identified and considered for delisting in compliance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill proceeding through the Dail.

National Positive Ageing Strategy Publication

28. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when the national positive ageing strategy will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7493/13]

42. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when the national positive ageing strategy will be brought forward; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7514/13]

111. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Health the expected publication date for the national positive ageing strategy; the reason it was not published in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7500/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 28, 42 and 111 together.

The Programme for Government has committed to completing and implementing the National Positive Ageing Strategy so that older people are recognised, supported and enabled to live independent full lives.

The Strategy will be a high level document outlining Ireland's vision for ageing and older people and the national goals and objectives required to promote positive ageing. It will be an over-arching cross-departmental policy that will be the blueprint for age related policy and service delivery across Government in the years ahead.

The Strategy is being developed within the constraints of the present fiscal situation. The intention of the Strategy is not to propose new service developments. The strategy will set the strategic direction for Government policy on ageing by outlining the priority areas requiring action. It will be a matter for individual Departments/agencies to identify how best they respond to the challenges posed by an ageing population.

The Strategy was considered by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy at its meeting on Tuesday last and will be brought to Government shortly.

Hospital Charges

29. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the way he will achieve the charging of all private patients in public hospitals; the steps and legislation needed to achieve this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7461/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As part of Budget 2013, it was announced that provision would be brought forward to enable public hospitals to charge all private patients

in public hospitals. New primary legislation will provide for an updated framework for the charging of private in-patients in public hospitals. The legislation is currently being developed by the Department. It is my intention to publish the legislation shortly during the current session of the Dáil.

Question No. 30 answered with Question No. 26.

Disabilities Services Funding

31. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health if he will detail where the cuts in disability funding outlined in the Health Service Executive national service plan 2013 will apply; the way that this will affect staffing levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7464/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): This Government currently provides funding of over €1.5 billion to the Disability Services Programme through the HSE's National Service Plan for 2013, and is committed to protecting front-line services for people with disabilities to the greatest possible extent.

The Minister for Health is working to ensure that protection is afforded to the disability sector, and the Social Care area as a whole.

In 2013 the HSE is seeking to maximise the provision of services within available resources and to maintaining a consistent level to that provided in 2012, by providing the following specialist disability services:

- residential services to over 9,000 people with a disability;
- day services to over 22,000 people with intellectual and physical disabilities;
- respite residential support for over 7,500 people with intellectual and physical disabilities;
- 1.68 m hours of Personal Assistant / Home Support Hours;

With regards to staffing levels the Government has decided that the numbers employed across the public service must be reduced in order to meet its fiscal and budgetary targets. The health sector must make its contribution to that reduction. This policy requires that by the end of 2013, the health service achieves a workforce of 98,955 whole time equivalents (WTEs). This is a very challenging target given the level of staff reductions that have been achieved in recent years.

In order to mitigate the impact on front-line services of the reduction in employment numbers, the priority is to reform how health services are delivered in order to ensure a more productive and cost effective health system. Therefore, the HSE is using the provisions of the Public Service Agreement to bring about greater flexibilities in work practices and rosters, re-deployment and other changes to achieve more efficient delivery of services.

Staff reductions will be pursued throughout 2013 through natural turnover (retirements and resignations) and such other targeted measures or initiatives as may be determined by Government in relation to the health sector or the wider public service.

The HSE National Service Plan provides for investment of an additional 1,025 WTEs in a number of key prioritised areas, as well as the completion of the 2012 mental health investment programme (400+) posts. Also, a graduate nurse employment programme will be implement-

ed, involving the recruitment of up to 1,000 nurses on two-year contracts. This will provide additional nursing capacity at service level.

In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service issues they have been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Ambulance Service Response Times

32. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if, in view of changes to ambulance services across the country over the last two years, he will confirm that the response time target of 19 minutes for ECHO and DELTA calls is being reached and, if not, the effect this is likely to have on health and safety issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7436/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The National Ambulance Service is not a static service. The NAS deploys its emergency resources in a dynamic manner and works on an area and national, rather than a local, basis. The dynamic deployment of ambulance resources ensures that the nearest appropriate resource within a region is mobilised to the incident.

For dynamic deployment of emergency resources within a region to be effective, those resources must be available to be used as efficiently as possible. Following a referral to the Labour Court under the Public Service Agreement, the NAS is progressing a number of efficiencies arising from the Court's ruling, including more efficient rostering and the removal of overtime built in to rosters. New rosters are now in place and are operating successfully. The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) has developed key performance indicators (KPIs) for pre-hospital emergency care, which classify 999 emergency calls by clinical status. Clinical Status 1 Echo calls involve life-threatening emergencies of cardiac or respiratory origin, while Clinical Status 1 Delta calls involve life-threatening emergencies other than cardiac or respiratory. The target times for responding to Echo and Delta calls are 7 minutes 59 seconds by a first responder (a person trained in minimum basic life support and use of a defibrillator) and 18 minutes 59 seconds for a patient-carrying vehicle. With effect from January 2012, HIQA set the target for first responders to meet the response time (7 minutes 59 seconds) in 75% of cases. From January 2013 the target for patient-carrying vehicles is to meet the Clinical Status 1 ECHO incidents response time (18 minutes 59 seconds) in 85% of cases.

The NAS has been taking a number of steps to improve emergency responses. These include development of a Performance Improvement Action Plan, an intermediate care service for non-emergency patient transfers, to release emergency resources for emergency use, the national control centre reconfiguration project and a trial emergency aeromedical service.

In light of the above, and following a review of the validity of time-based KPIs, it is considered, in line with international views, that clinical outcomes would be more appropriate as performance indicators. Accordingly, work has begun on their development. I also welcome the fact that use of clinical indicators will enable a focus on Clinical Status 1 (Echo and Delta) calls.

In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service matters, they have been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Symphysiotomy Report

33. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health when the full and com-

pleted Walsh report into the practice of symphysiotomy will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7453/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy is aware, my Department has commissioned an independent research report in relation to the practice of symphysiotomy in Ireland. The Research included a consultation process involving patient groups, health professionals and in particular the women who have experienced symphysiotomy. The researcher is currently finalising the report based on the consultation and it is also planned to have a peer review process. It is hoped that the report will be published early in 2013.

My first priority is to ensure that the women who have had this procedure have their health needs comprehensively and professionally met. In this regard, the HSE provides a range of services to women who continue to suffer the effects of having had this procedure. These services include the provision of medical cards, the availability of independent clinical advice and the organisation of individual pathways of care and the arrangement of appropriate follow-up.

Hospital Waiting Lists

34. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the action he is taking to reduce outpatient waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7516/13]

67. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to reduce the waiting times for adults awaiting inpatient and day case surgery; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7543/13]

110. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to reduce the waiting times for adults awaiting inpatient and day case surgery; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7542/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 34, 67 and 110 together.

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 scheduled care waiting times. The initial focus for the Special Delivery Unit's Scheduled Care Team has been on waiting times for in-patient and daycase elective surgery.

The HSE Service Plan 2012 set a target that no adult should have to wait longer than nine months for in-patient or daycase surgery. By the end of December 2012, the number of adults having to wait more than 9 months for in-patient and day case surgery was down to 86 from 3,706 in December 2011, a 98% decrease.

This is a significant achievement which shows what can be done to tackle access to in-patient and daycase services. The progress made in 2012 does not mean all problems are solved, and 2013 will remain very challenging against a target waiting time for this year of eight months. However, the improvement reflects my commitment, and that of this Government, to ensuring patients can access the acute hospital services they need, when they need them.

Access to outpatient waiting times is also a key priority and a maximum waiting time target

has now been set that no-one should be waiting longer than 12 months for a first-time outpatient appointment. The setting of this target has been made possible by the considerable work done by the HSE and the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) working in conjunction with the SDU. For the first time, clear and comprehensive data on outpatient waiting times is available (www.ptr.ie). The collation and analysis of outpatient waiting time data in a standardised format reveals the distribution of long waiters across all hospitals. In the first instance, this allows resources to be targeted towards those patients who are waiting longest, to ensure that they are seen and assessed. In parallel with reducing the numbers of longest waiters, the SDU will this year work with the HSE National Clinical Care Programmes to reform the structure, organisation and delivery of outpatient services to ensure that the right patient is seen and assessed by the right health professional at the right time.

Question No. 35 answered with Question No. 20.

European Court of Human Rights Judgments

36. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on his plans to implement the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in *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; if he will comment on media reports that he plans to have the threat to the life of a woman where there is a risk of suicide examined by up to five doctors when deciding whether abortion should be allowed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7539/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy is aware, last December 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. They also agreed to make appropriate amendments to the criminal law in this area.

Since then, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children held three days of oral hearings on the issue, 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, representative of churches and religious groups, and advocacy groups. 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 do not propose to comment on media reports concerning the content of the draft legislation at this time. Intensive work is currently underway in my Department on drafting this legislation and it is the Government's intention that the Heads of a Bill will be published in the next few months.

General Practitioner Services

37. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health the way he plans to increase the number of general practitioners here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7497/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Separate reports in 2009 by FÁS, ESRI and the Competition Authority and in 2010 by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children referred to the General Practitioner (GP) manpower issue and stated that 120 training places per year were not sufficient to meet the demands of a growing and ageing population. They recommended that the number of GP training places be increased to 150. In July 2010, the GP trainee intake increased from 120 to 157 training places per year. The Department commissioned research in 2011 to develop a model of demand for and supply of GP and practice nurse services. The outcome is a functional and adaptable Excel spreadsheet model which can be used in assessing future GP manpower needs.

The Health (Provision of General Practitioner Services) Act 2012 came into effect on 12 March 2012. This legislation eliminates restrictions on fully qualified and trained GPs wishing to obtain contracts to treat public patients under the GMS contract. It will encourage more young GPs to remain in Ireland and to establish their practice here and will make it more attractive for GPs to move here from overseas. As of 31st November 2012, a total of 97 GPs had obtained a GMS contract since the new legislation came into effect and a further 33 applications are being processed/awaiting Garda clearance, etc. On 31st December 2012, there were over 2,800 GPs, 2,368 of whom are GMS contract holders.

Suicide Prevention

38. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the key measures he is taking to tackle suicide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7494/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Suicide is a tragedy that we are constantly working to prevent and also working to give more support to the families affected. 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 makes a number of recommendations in relation to fast track referrals to community-based mental health services, effective response to deliberate self harm, training, stigma reduction, etc. Consequently, the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) has developed a range of initiatives to support people who are suicidal and also supports their families, friends and peers in recognising and responding appropriately to signs of emotional distress and suicidal thoughts.

Key initiatives progressed by the NOSP in 2012 include the provision of a wide range of awareness and training programmes including safeTALK and ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Training) which trains participants to become more alert to the possibility of suicide in their community, the continuation of the National Awareness Campaigns which, last year, specifically targeted men and young men, the funding of partner agencies and projects and the development of the recently launched Guidance for Post-Primary Schools on Mental Health & Suicide Prevention developed with the Department of Education and Skills.

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. Priority initiatives identified for this year include:

- The further development of existing National Mental Health Awareness campaigns to promote help seeking.
- Increased training for GPs and practice staff.
- Building the capacity of communities to respond to suicide.
- Implementation of the clinical care programme for self harm. This will include the funding of nursing posts within Hospital Emergency Departments, training of acute hospital staff on suicide and self harm intervention and the development of the SCAN (Suicide Crisis Assessment Nurse) model which allows for crisis interventions at primary care.
- Investment in voluntary agencies providing front-line services.

Question No. 39 answered with Question No. 12.

Question No. 40 answered with Question No. 26.

Question No. 41 answered with Question No. 25.

Question No. 42 answered with Question No. 28.

Hospital Services

43. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Health the reason the new epilepsy monitoring unit at Cork University Hospital and the redevelopment unit at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, remain unopened, in view of the completion of the units in the autumn of 2012 at an estimated spend of €900,000; if he will address this situation in the interest of epilepsy patients here; the timeframe for the opening of these facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7452/13]

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.

Written Answers Nos. 44-61

Questions Nos. 44 to 47, inclusive, answered with Question No. 26.

Hospital Waiting Lists

48. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to reduce waiting times for children awaiting inpatient and day care surgery; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7541/13]

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 scheduled care waiting times.

The initial focus for the SDU's Scheduled Care Team has been on waiting times for inpatient and daycase elective surgery. For children, the target in 2012 was that no child should be waiting longer than 20 weeks for inpatient or daycase surgery. At the end of 2012, 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 89 children waiting over 20 weeks can be attributed to two hospitals, with the remainder achieving the 20 week target.

While maintaining this progress will of course be challenging, the significant improvement in access is being achieved despite the economic and budgetary pressures which must be dealt with and managed. The progress made reflects my commitment, and that of this Government, to ensuring patients can access the acute hospital services they need, when they need them.

Question No. 49 answered with Question No. 20.

Health Services Provision

50. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health the reason bilateral cochlear implants are not funded in this State; if he will acknowledge the significant benefits of this procedure in comparison to unilateral implants; if he will address this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7458/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Beaumont Hospital is the centre for delivering Ireland's national cochlear implant programme with surgical provision for patients under six (6) years carried out in the Children's University Hospital at Temple Street. Since the programme commenced seventeen years ago, over 700 patients have received cochlear implants. I am advised that Beaumont Hospital carried out ninety cochlear implants in 2012.

In 2009 the UK's National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommended simultaneous bilateral cochlear implantation as best practice for children. No dedicated programme for simultaneous or sequential implantation is being carried out in Ireland at this time. However, some bilateral implantation has already occurred for patients, mainly very young children with certain medical conditions such as a history of meningitis or blindness.

I understand that Beaumont Hospital, HSE Management and the HSE's Audiology Clinical Care Programme (ACCP) have met recently to discuss a joint process to identify the options for developing and resourcing a programme of simultaneous cochlear implantation in children into the future. An important element of this will be the development of clear clinical criteria to prioritise clients for assessment and follow on implantation.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

51. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the way he intends to deliver on the reduction of fees payable to health professionals of some €70 million as outlined in the national service plan 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7468/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): On Budget Day, it was announced that the fees and allowances payable to certain health professionals will be reviewed. The professionals concerned are General Practitioners, Pharmacists, Dentists, Ophthalmologists, Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians who hold contracts with the HSE, Smartakers contracted under the CervicalCheck programme and Consultant Psychiatrists who hold contracts with the Mental Health Commission.

On 13 December 2012, the Department of Health placed a notice in the National newspapers and on the Department's website advising that a review of payments to the above health professionals was being carried out under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009. Interested parties were invited to provide written submissions by Friday 4 January 2013. The consultation period ended on 11 January 2013.

Following careful consideration of submissions made during the review and having due regard to Section 9 of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Act 2009, the Minister for Health will decide whether any reductions in fees/allowances will be made, and, if so, the scale of reductions that would be fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

Should the Minister decide that reductions are warranted, Regulations will be made under the FEMPI Act with the approval of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Accident and Emergency Departments Waiting Times

52. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to tackle overcrowding and the use of trolleys in accident and emergency departments nationally; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7546/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Immediately following my appointment, I established the Special Delivery Unit, as set out in the Programme for Government. The aim of the SDU is to unblock access to acute services by improving the flow of patients through the system.

There was significant progress during the course of 2012 in reducing the number of patients waiting on trolleys. In December 2012, there were 23.5% fewer patients waiting on trolleys compared to December 2011. This equates to more than 20,000 patients whose experience of our acute hospitals has been significantly improved.

Since before Christmas hospitals have seen a significant increase in the number of very sick patients needing admission. The increase in norovirus in hospitals has been well publicised; we are also seeing high levels of admissions of frail elderly people and of patients presenting with

respiratory related illnesses.

However, evidence from the last year has proven that the health system has the capacity to respond to these challenges and to continue to improve emergency care. The situation is being actively managed at a national level, while all staff including consultants, nurses, allied health staff and management is working extremely hard to address the pressures experienced by hospitals since the New Year.

Health Services Expenditure

53. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health the way he will reduce the State's drug bill; if he will detail the savings that will be made over the next three years; the legislation and agreements that will be necessary to deliver these savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7465/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Following intensive negotiations involving the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA), the HSE and the Department of Health, a major new deal on the cost of drugs in the State was concluded in October last. It will deliver a number of important benefits, including

- significant reductions for patients in the cost of drugs,
- a lowering of the drugs bill to the State,
- timely access for patients to new cutting-edge drugs for certain conditions, and
- reducing the cost base of the health system into the future.

The gross savings arising from this deal will be in excess of €400m over 3 years. €210 million from the gross savings will make available new drugs to patients over 3 years. Thus, the deal will result in a net reduction in the HSE expenditure on drugs of about €190m.

The Department of Health and the HSE have also successfully finalised discussions with the Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers in Ireland (APMI), which represents the generic industry, on a new agreement to deliver further savings in the cost of generic drugs. It is estimated that the combined gross savings from the IPHA and APMI deals will be in excess of €120 million in 2013.

The IPHA agreement provides that prices are referenced to the currency adjusted average price to wholesaler in the nominated EU member states in which the medicine is then available. The prices of a range of medicines were reduced on 1 January 2013 in accordance with the agreement.

The Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012, which is currently before the House, provides for the introduction of a system of generic substitution and reference pricing. The Bill provides that when the HSE is setting a reference price for, or reviewing a reference price set for, a relevant group of interchangeable medicinal products it shall take into account the following criteria:

- the ability of suppliers to meet patient demand for the relevant item;
- the value for money afforded by the relevant item;
- the equivalent prices of the relevant item in all other Member States where the product is

marketed;

- the prices of therapeutically similar items; and
- the resources available to the HSE.

It is important to balance achieving best value for money for the taxpayer with assuring continuity of supply for critical medical products, particularly in a small market like Ireland. Consequently, the Bill aims to achieve value for money while avoiding disruption in the availability of medicines on the Irish market.

HSE Agency Staff Issues

54. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which he continues to examine the possibility of the greater use of part-time or temporary nursing staff as a means of achieving economies in order to work within budget; if he will provide an adequate spread of nursing cover throughout the health service; if he intends to examine alternative options with a view to achieving this objective with particular reference to the number of graduate nurses registered following his recent initiative in this regard; if he intends to re-examine the cohort of qualified nurses available in sufficient numbers to meet current and future requirements; if he expects to be in a position to make further announcements in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7537/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government has decided that the numbers employed across the public service must be reduced in order to meet fiscal and budgetary targets. The health sector must make its contribution to that reduction. Subject to compliance with national policy, particularly in relation to the employment control framework, it is a matter for the HSE to determine the composition of its staffing complement.

The HSE is continually pursuing measures to achieve staffing economies. The National Service Plan for 2013 identifies a range of objectives to be advanced, including work practice changes for identified health disciplines, systematic reviews of rosters, skill-mix and staffing levels, increased use of re-deployment, further productivity increases and a focused approach to addressing absenteeism and implementing revised new sick leave arrangements.

The Plan also provides for tight control of the use of higher-cost staffing arrangements and in particular the use of agency staffing and overtime working. The graduate nurse placement initiative will provide participants with frontline working experience and professional development opportunities, while at the same time providing additional nursing capacity at service level.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform approved this employment initiative on the basis that participants would not be counted in health service staff numbers and that it would contribute to savings on unsustainable levels of agency and overtime expenditure. The HSE's National Service Plan for 2013 provides for a saving of €10m in the current year, arising from the introduction of this scheme. Given the requirement on the HSE to reduce numbers employed and to maximise savings, there is only very limited scope to offer permanent nursing posts at present.

HSE Expenditure

55. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health his role with regard to the de-

velopment of the annual Health Service Executive budget; his powers of review and oversight in relation to same; the methodology for allocating the HSE budget on an annual basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7443/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The level of funding available for the health budget is determined as part of the Estimates and budgetary process for that year. The Health Act 2004 requires that, within 21 days after the publication by Government of the Estimates, the Health Service Executive (HSE) prepares a National Service Plan and submits it to me for my approval. The preparation of the Plan is undertaken by the HSE, in consultation with my Department. The Plan must indicate the type and volume of health and personal social services to be delivered by the HSE for the monies allocated under its Vote. In accordance with the Act I am required to lay a copy of the Plan before both Houses of the Oireachtas within 21 days of approving it. Throughout the year my Department monitors and evaluates the implementation of the Plan by the HSE, including its level of expenditure. There is constant engagement between my Department, the HSE and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding these matters with a view to ensuring the Plan is delivered within the resources available. In addition, there are regular reports submitted to Government regarding the HSE's budgetary position.

Question No. 56 answered with Question No. 17.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Applications

57. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the way the waiting list for the nursing home support scheme will be administered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7469/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Nursing Homes Support Scheme is a demand-led, resource capped system of financial support for individuals who are assessed as requiring long-term nursing home care. The total gross budget for long-term residential care was €994.7m in 2012. The final budget for 2013 will not be available until the Revised Estimates for Public Services are published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The HSE operates a national list to enable it to operate within the budget for the Scheme. All applicants who are approved for funding are put on the placement list in chronological order by the date of determination of their application. Funding issues to applicants in this chronological order to ensure equity nationally. Funding is currently being released on a weekly basis.

The 2013 Service Plan sets a target of 22,761 people to be in receipt of financial support at end-2013, compared to 22,065 at end-2012. Approvals will continue to be granted and the position will be kept under constant weekly review. The HSE is already monitoring the Scheme on a weekly basis and has demonstrated its ability to manage this process effectively.

Question No. 58 answered with Question No. 26.

Departmental Reports

59. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health the reason the Expert Group set up to monitor the implementation of A Vision for Change has been disbanded; which of its sixth and final report recommendations, if any, have been implemented; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [7463/13]

100. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health if the expert group monitoring a Vision for Change is still active; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7508/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 59 and 100 together.

I presume the Deputy is referring to the Independent Monitoring Group for *A Vision for Change (AVFC)* which ceased its three year term in June 2012. This Group was appointed to oversee implementation of the Report. *AVFC* contained a commitment that it would be reviewed after seven years and we have now reached that 7-year anniversary. The current priority, however, is to review the Mental Health Act 2001 after which urgent consideration will be given to reviewing *AVFC* and establishing independent monitoring arrangements. I expect that the review of the Act will be completed and presented to me in quarter two of this year. In the interim, the HSE continues to implement *AVFC* with substantial additional funding provided in 2012 and 2013, and reports on this on a monthly basis, through the HSE National Service Plan.

The recommendations of the Independent Monitoring Group are consistent with the recommendations in *A Vision for Change*, our National Strategy for mental health. Implementation of the Strategy and the reform of our mental health services is a priority for this Government. However, implementation has been slower than originally expected as it has been delayed by a number of factors including the changed economic context, constraints in public spending and the moratorium on recruitment. It is expected that the appointment of a Director for Mental Health, which was advertised recently by the HSE, will greatly accelerate the pace of implementation.

Nonetheless, a great deal of progress has been made with the accelerated closure of old psychiatric hospitals and their replacement with bespoke new facilities, better suited to modern mental health care. Progress also includes shorter episodes of in-patient care and the involvement of service users in all aspects of mental health policy, service planning and delivery. In addition, Clinical Care Programmes for the treatment and care of patients with Eating Disorders, Early Intervention in Psychosis and the Management of Self Harm Presentations to Emergency Departments are being progressed by the HSE. The clinical care programme plan will provide service models that implement *AVFC*. Core to the overall plans will be the principles of recovery, individualised care delivered in partnership with voluntary agencies and based on early intervention and evidence based practice.

A modern mental health service is best delivered in the community and in 2012 a special allocation of €35m was provided primarily to further strengthen Community Mental Health Teams in both adult and children's mental health services, to advance activities in the area of suicide prevention, to initiate the provision of psychological and counselling services in primary care, specifically for people with mental health problems and to facilitate the re-location of mental health service users from institutional care to more independent living arrangements in their communities.

Budgetary pressures within the HSE delayed the full utilisation of this funding, but this sum is now available to mental health services along with an additional €35m allocated in Budget 2013 for the continued development of mental health services across a range of headings, including the further ongoing development of community services. This represents a total of €70m additional revenue to modernise and reform our mental health services in 2013. Over 850 new mental health professionals are being employed to strengthen these services.

Patient Safety Agency Establishment

60. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health when the programme for Government commitment to establish a patient safety authority will be honoured; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7495/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department is examining the appropriate structures for the responsibilities that might be assigned to the Patient Safety Agency (PSA) taking account of the international experience and the existing structures and organisations in the Irish health system. The role and inter-relationship of the PSA with the reforming health system needs to be carefully designed and developed. My Department is liaising with the Health Service Executive on the details surrounding the establishment of the PSA to ensure an identifiable and distinct leadership responsibility for patient safety and quality at national level having regard to the need for a robust quality and safety function within the new delivery structures of the Reform Programme. The intention is to establish a Patient Safety Agency on an administrative basis in 2013.

Home Help Service Provision

61. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health in view of promised restoration of the pre-September 2012 level of funding for home help hours, if he will instruct the Health Service Executive to arrange an assessment or reassessment of the home help hours provision for all those whose hours were cut in the last quarter of 2012 with a view to restoring the withdrawn hours to the greatest number of people possible, commensurate with freshly assessed need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7449/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I have already indicated that care provision in 2013 for Home Help, Home Care Packages and Personal Assistant hours will be restored to 2012 levels.

In line with its normal procedures for the allocation or review of Home Support services at individual level, the HSE will review as appropriate those who have a medically assessed requirement for services, to ensure that these services are provided on a prioritised basis in line with assessed need. The review process also facilitates adjustments in the service provision to allow for changes in health or other circumstances. The HSE will continue to target services at the most vulnerable and to recycle hours and care packages from people whose needs reduce or come to an end.

Written Answers Nos. 62-79

National Children's Hospital Status

62. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the situation with regard to the new children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7511/13]

68. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Health the progress that has been made in the construction of the new children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7513/13]

71. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health who will take the lead responsibility for the building of the new children's hospital, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7506/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 62, 68 and 71 together.

The decision to locate the new children's hospital on the St James's campus was announced on 6 November 2012. Co-location, and ultimately tri-location with a maternity hospital, on the St James's campus will support the provision of excellence in clinical care that our children deserve.

The new children's hospital is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and the largest project within the current Capital Plan. This Government regards the building of the hospital as a priority and no effort will be spared in expediting its completion.

Following the announcement of the Government's decision, detailed consideration has been given to the project management structures and governance arrangements required to enable delivery of the project as quickly as possible and to the highest quality. In this regard I intend to restructure the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board and to establish a Children's Hospital Group which will include the three existing paediatric hospitals. The restructured National Paediatric Hospital Development Board will focus on the capital project only. The membership of the restructured Board will align with this core function and include the necessary capital development expertise.

The required legislation will, inevitably, take some time and as the terms of office of the majority of Board members expired on 5 December, I have appointed senior representatives from my Department and the HSE as an interim measure aimed at ensuring effective governance and decision-making for the project during this transitional phase.

At this important initial stage it is crucial that the project continues without delay and, in parallel with consideration of governance arrangements, work has also been progressing in relation to the site and site preparation, while a review of urgent care centre(s) configuration is underway and a time-limited review of Dublin maternity services configuration is due to commence shortly.

This Government's priority is to ensure that the project proceeds securely to completion as quickly as possible and with optimal results. I am confident that the project management and governance structures now being put in place will enable the fastest possible delivery of this key infrastructure for children's hospital services.

Universal Health Insurance White Paper

63. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health when the White Paper on Financing UHI will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7486/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government is embarking on a major reform programme for the health system, the aim of which is to deliver a single tier health service, supported by universal health insurance (HUI), where access is based on need, not on income. Under UHI, everyone will be insured and will have equal access to a standard package of primary and acute hospital services, including acute mental health services. A new Insurance Fund will subsidise or pay insurance premiums for those who qualify for a subsidy.

The Department is preparing a White Paper on Universal Health Insurance which will provide further detail on the UHI model for Ireland in addition to the estimated costs and financing mechanisms associated with the introduction of universal health insurance. The work involved is both complex and technical, necessitating significant research and financial modelling to support analysis and costing of different design options. This, in turn, demands a wide-range of specialised expertise. The Department is engaged in a process to ensure the provision of this expertise to feed into work on the preparation of the White Paper during 2013. The White Paper will be published as early as possible within the Government's term of office.

In advance of the White Paper, my Department has produced a Preliminary Paper on UHI, which I intend to publish very shortly.

Hospital Services

64. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health his plans if any to review the provision of non-planned services at Roscommon County Hospital; the proposed development in such services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7434/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As part of reconfiguration services in Roscommon County Hospital in line with HIQA recommendations by a pass protocol, diverting ambulances to level 3 and 4 hospitals for life-threatening cardiac, respiratory and other serious conditions was put in place before the Emergency Department was closed in 2011. This is in line with national clinical care protocols for best practice and safe management of the patient with a heart attack or stroke. These protocols require such patients to be treated in a level 3 or 4 hospital as a level 2 hospital does not have a Critical Care Unit. Stabilisation of such patients is a key function of pre-hospital emergency care and is carried out by paramedics who assess, treat and stabilise patients prior to transporting them to an appropriate facility for care.

Accident victims should only be managed in a hospital with a full ED department with the necessary available acute care back-up including ICU. The essence is that patients should go to the hospital that is best able to treat them – this is particularly important for heart attack and stroke victims whose survival rate and long term prognosis is dependent on how quickly they reach an appropriate hospital.

Roscommon County Hospital is leading the way by demonstrating the range of services that can be developed in a smaller hospital. In July 2011, Roscommon County Hospital commenced a process of reconfiguring services in line with HIQA recommendations. It now has a Medical Assessment Unit that is open 9-5pm Monday to Friday for the assessment of medical patients who are referred by GPs, after initial phone triage with one of the medical consultants to ensure that the MAU is the appropriate care pathway for that patient. In addition, it has an Urgent Care Centre (UCC) open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week, which deals with minor injuries/trauma.

Developments in 2012 include: Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Sleep Studies, Urology Services, Radiology Upgrade, a newly developed Endoscopy Suite, Dental Service, Nurse Prescribing and re-accreditation for student nurse training.

Roscommon played a key role in Galway/Roscommon Hospital Group, with more than 520 endoscopy procedures transferred from Galway to Roscommon. Future plans for Roscommon hospital see increases in elective inpatient care, in particular in endoscopy – plans for which are well advanced with design agreed, site identified, tender documents complete, funding secured and awaiting planning permission. Roscommon is an excellent example of delivering appropriate care in the appropriate setting to maximise patient safety and resources. With regard to the

Deputies specific query on reviewing the provision of “non-planned” services at Roscommon County Hospital, as this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Health Services Issues

65. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if he recognises the condition, X microvascular dysfunction, as a cardiac syndrome; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that in the US they have developed a new machine to diagnose the condition more effectively; the reason that some people with this debilitating condition cannot receive a statement from their cardiologists that they are unfit for work which affects their social welfare entitlements; if his Department will formulate public awareness programmes to raise awareness of this condition here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7633/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Microvascular dysfunction is sometimes referred to as microvascular angina or cardiac syndrome X is recognised as a cardiac syndrome. This rare syndrome is difficult to diagnose and is a diagnosis of exclusion, meaning that diagnosis is reached by a process of elimination. The tests for the syndrome are the same tests carried out for coronary heart disease. Outside of research procedures, I am not aware of a new machine that is in use for treatment of the syndrome. As the carrying out of Public Awareness Campaigns is the responsibility of the HSE, I will bring this matter to their attention.

I cannot comment here on clinical related decisions by medical consultants concerned with specific cases.

Question No. 66 answered with Question No. 26.

Question No. 67 answered with Question No. 34.

Question No. 68 answered with Question No. 62.

Medical Card Eligibility

69. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will detail his proposed changes to medical card entitlements and income criteria as outlined in the Health Service Executive National Service Plan 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7446/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As part of Budget 2013, it was announced that the income thresholds for medical cards for the over 70s age group are to be changed. The intention is that persons aged 70 years and over, whose gross weekly income is not more than €600 in the case of single persons and €1,200 in the case of couples, will qualify for full eligibility (medical cards); persons aged 70 years and over, whose gross weekly income is more than €600 but less than €700 in the case of single persons and more than €1,200 but less than €1,400 in the case of couples, will qualify for GP Visit Cards.

People who do not qualify for a medical card are entitled to make use of the Drugs Payment Scheme (DPS) which reimburses the cost of medication that exceeds a monthly threshold. The new rules will not take effect until later in 2013, after primary legislation has been enacted. The implementation date will be announced and publicised in advance by the Department and the HSE.

It was also announced that, in relation to eligibility for the standard medical card, the rules relating to a person's spending that are taken into account when carrying out the means test will be tightened. The Department will first examine this proposal in more detail in consultation with the HSE. Again, the new rules and the implementation date will be announced and publicised in advance by the Department and the HSE.

Question No. 70 answered with Question No. 26.

Question No. 71 answered with Question No. 62.

Question No. 72 answered with Question No. 9.

Care of the Elderly

73. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which elder abuse is going unreported; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7487/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): In 2010, the National Centre for the Protection of Older People, which is funded by the Health Service Executive, published its Report on *Abuse and Neglect of Older People in Ireland*. The Report found a significantly greater prevalence of elder abuse than is being reported. The under-reporting of elder abuse is a widely recognised issue internationally.

The HSE provides a comprehensive Elder Abuse Service aimed at tackling and preventing elder abuse. The Service is comprised of dedicated Senior Case Workers for the Protection of Older People (social workers), Dedicated Officers for the Protection of Older People, (regional coordinators), unified data collection, national and regional oversight committees, a national research facility, awareness raising and training programmes. Because of the nature of referrals to this service, all cases are prioritised and responded to as a matter of urgency upon receipt of referral. I urge anybody with concerns about elder abuse to contact the HSE.

Obesity Levels

74. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health his views on the need to introduce a sugar tax on soft drinks or a so called fat tax in order to combat obesity here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7540/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The prevalence of overweight and obesity has risen steadily in recent times, with 61% of Irish adults now overweight or obese. The problem has been exacerbated as a result of our changing social, economic and physical environment and by a dramatic reduction in physical activity, and changing dietary patterns. Alone, no single initiative will reverse the trend, but it is hoped that a combination of actions against obesity will help. As Minister for Health, I have made overweight and obesity a public health priority and have established a Special Action Group on Obesity (SAGO) with whom I meet regularly to progress the obesity agenda.

The Special Action Group on Obesity is concentrating on a range of measures including actions such as calorie posting in restaurants; as a means of educating the general public on the calorie content of food portions; revision of this Department's Healthy Eating Guidelines, including the Food Pyramid, which were launched last year to help inform people about the food and drink choices required for a healthy lifestyle and set out in plain and simple language the food servings the Irish population need to consume to maintain health and well-being. Work is

also being progressed in such areas as treatment algorithms which have been agreed and will inform primary care staff of the steps to be taken with regard to managing obesity. The Special Action Group on Obesity has been considering opportunistic screening and monitoring with the HSE with a view to earlier detection of overweight and obesity in children. Research is underway in association with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to establish the use and types of foods and drinks stocked in vending machines in post primary schools. The HSE has also developed a Physical Activity Plan for Ireland to give clear direction for the promotion of physical activity in Ireland and address the risk of developing health problems associated with sustained inactivity.

A sugar sweetened drinks levy is just one of a range of actions that have been under consideration. A Steering Group was established to oversee the carrying out of a Health Impact Assessment on the health and economic aspects of introducing a Sugar Sweetened Drinks tax. The Institute of Public Health facilitated the Department of Health with this assessment. I intend to publish this assessment in the near future.

The Special Action Group on Obesity is now looking at ways of reducing food consumption from the top shelf of the food pyramid, in accordance with this Department's Healthy Eating Guidelines.

Question No. 75 answered with Question No. 26.

Question No. 76 answered with Question No. 16.

Question No. 77 answered with Question No. 26.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

78. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Health if he will explain the way he is addressing the issue of the continuing non-payment of a training allowance for full-time clinical placement to student medical scientists registered with Dublin Institute of Technology; and when students may expect to be paid this allowance. [7435/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE has in the past confirmed to all health sector employers that Student Medical Scientists on placement must be paid the monthly training allowance as set out in my Department's consolidated salary scales.

This allowance was approved for continued award to new beneficiaries, following the review of public sector allowances conducted in 2012. The HSE has recently reiterated in clear terms to hospitals that this allowance should be paid to all Student Medical Scientists on work placement. I have asked the HSE to seek confirmation from the hospitals concerned that the necessary amounts are being paid.

Hospital Consultants Remuneration

79. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the savings that could be made if consultants' pay was reduced to the EU average; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7510/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): It is not possible to calculate a precise figure in this regard, given the range of variables that would have to be taken into account. The average salary for a consultant working in the public health service was approximately €170,000 in

2012. Including allowances, the average salary was about €185,000.

My immediate priority is to achieve more effective implementation of the existing consultants contract and to reform how services are delivered to patients. The terms of the agreement reached with the consultant representative bodies at the Labour Relations Commission in September 2012 provide for significant changes in working practices and more cost-effective delivery of services. A number of further matters were addressed by the Labour Court in LCR 20403 of 6 November 2012. Health service management is proceeding with implementation of the changes arising from the industrial relations process.

Written Answers Nos. 80-97

Ministerial Appointments

80. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health the reason just one person out of 40 who applied for a place on the board of the Health Information and Quality Authority was appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7504/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In order to comply with the Government's Decision to widen the opportunity for board membership of State Bodies my Department invited expressions of interest, through the Public Appointments Service, from suitably qualified and experienced persons interested in being appointed to the Board of the Health Information and Quality Authority. As the Deputy will be aware, in making any board appointments, I am not necessarily confined to those who make such expressions of interest through the Public Appointments Service.

I am proceeding with the appointment of new members to the Board of the Health Information and Quality Authority. In doing so I must have regard to the body or agency in question and its particular area of responsibility etc. as well as ensuring that the board members have an appropriate mix of skills and experience in such areas as corporate governance, legal expertise, financial expertise (with particular reference to audit capability and/or project assessment). Based on the above criteria I am selecting those most suitable to become Board Members of HIQA.

HSE Staffing

81. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health when the 477 posts allocated for mental health services in the Health Service Executive's 2013 national service plan will be advertised; the timeframe for the recruitment of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7448/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Budget 2013 provided an additional €35 million for the continued development of our mental health services. The HSE National Service Plan 2013 commits to a number of objectives including the further development of forensics and community mental health teams for adults, children, older persons and mental health intellectual disability and to the recruitment of 477 additional staff to implement these measures.

In order to ensure that the additional resources will be used to best effect, discussions are ongoing within the HSE, and in consultation with the Department of Health, to finalise the al-

location of these resources. It has been agreed that the allocation of staff will be subject to detailed business cases from the HSE Regions for each objective and that the following conditions should be met:

- All posts will be allocated to the community mental health teams for each objective and for no other purpose.

- All teams must discharge the *Team Co-ordinator* role to ensure effective working as a multidisciplinary team.

- All teams must implement the Clinical Programmes, as agreed.

- All Teams must complete and return required Key Performance Indicators, both existing and new.

- All postholders will work as part of a mental health services community mental health multidisciplinary team.

Each HSE Region is being asked to submit a business case against each of the identified objectives detailing how the funding is to be spent and the type and number of WTE to be recruited. It is expected that this process will be concluded by end March 2013. Until that process is completed, I am not in a position to indicate when these posts will be advertised or the timeframe for recruitment.

Question No. 82 answered with Question No. 25.

Care of the Elderly

83. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health the way the reduced budget allocation for older people announced in the Health Service Executive 2013 Service Plan will impact on services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7512/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Mental Health Services Provision

84. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Health the number of community mental health workers newly employed in 2012; the number who left the health service in 2012; the numbers likely to be recruited in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7498/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government is firmly committed to the development of community mental health services in line with *A Vision for Change*. In 2012, a special allocation of €35m was provided for mental health to be used primarily to further strengthen Community Mental Health Teams in both adult and children's mental health services, to advance activities in the area of suicide prevention, to initiate the provision of psychological and counselling services in primary care, and to facilitate the transfer of mental health service users from institutional to community based care. 414 posts were approved as part of the €35m package, over 200 of which have now been filled. The remainder of the posts are at various stages of recruitment and are expected to be filled by the end of March 2013. A further €35m and over 470 new posts was provided for in Budget 2013 for the continued development of mental health services across a range of headings, including the further ongoing develop-

ment of community services; the recruitment process for the new posts funded in 2013 will commence immediately.

The HSE has been asked to respond directly to the Deputy with the specific details requested in relation to the community mental health workforce.

Medicinal Products Supply

85. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Health the way he hopes to make the public more aware of the availability of generic medicines in view of the low take-up by comparison to other countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7485/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012 was published on the 13th of July 2012. The Bill completed its passage through the Seanad on Wednesday, the 19th of September, and completed Second Stage in the Dáil on the 17th of December. It is anticipated that the Bill will continue its passage through the Dáil within the next few weeks.

An Implementation Group on Generic Substitution and Reference Pricing has been established and it held its inaugural meeting on the 9th of August 2012. The Group held stakeholder meetings on the 20th of November 2012.

A Communications Subgroup was also established and is currently working on a communications strategy the aim of which is to raise public awareness of generics.

Question No. 86 answered with Question No. 26.

Hospitals Funding

87. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason better performing hospitals have seen their budget allocations reduced in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7491/13]

98. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Health the reason funding for two Dublin children's hospitals has been cut in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7492/13]

106. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health if he will publish the criteria for allocations to acute hospitals for 2013, including the reason for major reductions to St. James's Hospital, Crumlin Children's Hospital and Temple Street Hospital, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7473/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 87, 98 and 106 together.

In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as these are service matters, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in these matters.

Question No. 88 answered with Question No. 25.

Question No. 89 answered with Question No. 26.

HSE Staffing

90. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if he will outline where the 17 posts for the diabetes programme and five posts for audiology services, as outlined in the Health Service Executive National Service Plan 2013 will be located; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7462/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Preparations for the national roll out of the Integrated Care Diabetes Programme are at an advanced stage. The HSE has begun to recruit 17 Integrated Care Diabetes Nurse Specialists to support the phased roll out of the Diabetes Programme. Funding for these posts was confirmed in the HSE's National Service Plan for 2013.

The Diabetes Nurse Specialists will spend four days per week working in primary care and one day per week in the secondary care system. The HSE is now finalising arrangements for the designation of the GP practices / Primary Care Teams to which the nurses will be assigned. They will be initially assigned within each ISA to initiatives with a catchment area of 75,000.

The HSE National Audiology Review Group Report (2011) included a recommendation that a new managerial and clinical structure be put in place to develop the service. 5 Audiology posts, comprising a National Lead post based in Dublin and 4 Assistant Leads, one assigned to each of the 4 HSE regions will be appointed. The exact location of the 4 Assistant Lead posts will be finalised shortly.

Health Services Staff Issues

91. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health the extent of refusal or inability to take up or continue staff release for training occasioned by the current shortage of frontline personnel across our hospital network and in community based services; his views that staff release for training is essential if our health services are to develop and if we are going to upskill staff who will be obliged to fill the roles of others retiring or leaving; the steps he proposes to take to address any stalling of training access that has or is presenting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7472/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am of course aware of the central role education, training and continued professional development plays in supporting good practice and in the delivery of safe and effective care. However, as staff training and development is a matter for the HSE in the first instance, the Deputy's question has been referred to the Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Services

92. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when the Higgins report on the reconfiguration of hospitals in the south east will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7488/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Recommendations on the formation of specific groups and arrangements for the management and governance of all groups including the hospitals in the South East, have been included as part of a report on the establishment of hospital groups as a transition to hospital trusts. This report is based on a comprehensive consultation process, as well as a significant number of submissions from stakeholders and

individual citizens. These recommendations have been considered and endorsed by a Strategic Board composed of representatives with national and international expertise in health service delivery, governance and linkages with academic institutions.

The report on the establishment of hospital groups as a transition to independent hospital trusts has just been presented to me in the last 48 hours. I intend to prioritise consideration of this report which I will then submit to Government for decision on the composition of hospital groups, in light of the recommendations of the Report.

The Government will then decide on the initial make up of hospital groups which will be established on an administrative basis pending the legislation required to set up hospital trusts by 2015. Before those trusts are established the composition and functioning of the Groups will be reviewed and if changes prove necessary then they will be made with Government approval when the hospital trusts are being formed.

Questions Nos. 93 and 94 answered with Question No. 26.

Departmental Expenditure

95. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which he has monitored the effect of budgetary controls within the health service in the current year to date in the context of keeping within budget; if any particular or specific areas have been identified wherein changes or improvements may be made with a view to ensuring that vital frontline services are not detrimentally affected to the extent of undermining the integrity of the service; if he has observed any particular issues needing attention in this regard with a view to resolution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7538/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): There is ongoing and intensive engagement each month between officials from my Department and the HSE in the context of regular monitoring of expenditure. My Department also provides detailed analysis each month on expenditure trends to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and there is regular engagement between officials from that Department, my own Department and the HSE. The HSE's Performance Report, which is published every month, provides an overall analysis of key performance data from Finance, HR, Hospital and Primary & Community Services. The activity data reported is based on Performance Activity and Key Performance Indicators outlined in the HSE National Service Plan. The December Performance Report is the most recent data available and can be viewed on the HSE's website - www.hse.ie

My Department, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the HSE are working collaboratively on a Financial Improvement Programme with a view to strengthening the Executive's financial and performance management and reporting systems during 2013.

Question No. 96 answered with Question No. 26.

Question No. 97 answered with Question No. 25.

Written Answers Nos. 98 - 115

Question No. 98 answered with Question No. 87.

Question No. 99 answered with Question No. 26.

Question No. 100 answered with Question No. 59.

Departmental Reports

101. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Health the date on which he or his Department will receive the report on hospital groups; the date on which he will publish the report; his plans to progress the implementation of hospital groups; if he intends to publish the report and its recommendations before it goes to Cabinet; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7470/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Recommendations on the formation of specific groups and arrangements for the management and governance of all groups have been included as part of a report on the establishment of hospital groups as a transition to hospital trusts. This report is based on a comprehensive consultation process, as well as a significant number of submissions from stakeholders and individual citizens. These recommendations have been considered and endorsed by a Strategic Board composed of representatives with national and international expertise in health service delivery, governance and linkages with academic institutions.

The report on the establishment of hospital groups as a transition to independent hospital trust has just been presented to me in the last 48 hours by the Chair of the Strategic Board, Professor John Higgins. I intend to prioritise consideration of this report, which will then be submitted to and presented to Government for decision on the hospital groups composition in light of the recommendations of the Report. The Government will then decide on the initial make up of hospital groups which will be established on an administrative basis pending the legislation required to set up hospital trusts by 2015. Before those trusts are established the composition and functioning of the Groups will be reviewed and if changes prove necessary then they will be made with Government approval when the hospital trusts are being formed. As such I cannot comment at this time on the final composition of the new Hospital Groups and will not be publishing the Report or its recommendations prior to it going to Cabinet.

Ambulance Service Response Times

102. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health his plans to improve ambulance coverage and response times throughout County Roscommon and east Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7433/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Nationally co-ordinated pre-hospital emergency care is provided by the HSE National Ambulance Service (NAS). Pre-hospital emergency care supports wider healthcare reform such as the reorganisation of acute care provision, including the Small Hospitals Framework, and implementation of the clinical care programmes.

The Health Information and Quality Authority has developed a set of key performance indicators (KPIs), which classify 999 emergency calls by clinical status. Clinical Status 1 Echo calls involve life-threatening emergencies of cardiac or respiratory origin. Clinical Status 1 Delta calls involve life-threatening emergencies of other than cardiac or respiratory origin. The target times for responding to Echo 1 and Delta 1 calls are 7 minutes 59 seconds by a first responder (a person trained in minimum basic life support and use of a defibrillator) and 18 minutes 59 seconds for a patient-carrying vehicle. With effect from January 2012, HIQA set the target for first responders to meet the response time (7 minutes 59 seconds) in 75% of cases. From January 2013 the target for patient-carrying vehicles is to meet the Clinical Status 1 ECHO incidents

response time (18 minutes 59 seconds) in 85% of cases.

Following a review of the validity of time-based KPIs for clinical status data, and in line with international views, it is considered that clinical outcome indicators would be more appropriate, and work has begun on their development. I also welcome the consequential outcome that use of clinical indicators will enable a focus on Clinical Status 1 (Echo and Delta) calls.

The NAS has been taking a number of steps to improve response times. These include development of a Performance Improvement Action Plan, an intermediate care service, the control centre reconfiguration project and a trial emergency aeromedical service. Following a referral to the Labour Court under the Public Service Agreement, the NAS is progressing a number of efficiencies arising from the Court's recommendations, including the issue of overtime built in to rosters. New rosters are now in place and are operating successfully.

Through its control centre reconfiguration project, the NAS is continuing to rationalise the number of ambulance control rooms across the country, with a target of one system across 2 sites - Tallaght and Ballyshannon. The current total is nine. This project is focused on improving call taking and dispatch functions and on delivering improved technology. This will assist in improving response times and will allow the NAS to deploy resources in a much more effective and efficient manner, on a regional and national basis rather than within small geographic areas.

The Emergency Aeromedical Service (EAS) was initiated as a 12 month trial in June 2012, with two purposes - to reduce the transit time to an appropriate facility for certain conditions, particularly in the West, and to determine the extent, if any, of the need for aeromedical support to the NAS and, if required, how best to provide it. The trial involves the Irish Air Corps providing aeromedical support to the HSE NAS, from a base in Custume Barracks, Athlone. The aircraft is operated by the Air Corps, with clinical staffing from the NAS. The Irish Coast Guard also provides additional support to the primary aircraft, using its new search and rescue helicopter in Shannon, staffed by its own paramedics and an NAS advanced paramedic when necessary.

The NAS is developing non-emergency transport, through a national intermediate care service (ICS), which is key to resolving bed and clinical management pressures. ICS will allow for safe, planned and timely clinical transfers of inpatients to the most appropriate facility, depending on their acuity and clinical needs. This will allow for beds to be made available for higher acuity admissions through emergency departments. ICS will also release emergency resources for emergency functions, for improved response times and performances in pre-hospital care. To date, ICS has been implemented in Cavan, Castleblayney, South County Dublin, Letterkenny, Sligo, Galway, Limerick, Roscommon, Mallow and Bantry. Supported by the 2013 National Service Plan, the NAS intends to expand ICS to Waterford, Cork, Tralee, Castlebar and Drogheda and to increase services in Dublin and Galway during 2013.

The NAS, with the Retrieval and Transport Medicine Programme, will also use these additional services to support the Critical Care Programme, through the establishment and extension of critical care retrieval services.

Hospital Waiting Lists

103. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken to reduce the waiting times for patients awaiting a routine endoscopy procedure; the impact of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7544/13]

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 healthcare, both scheduled and unscheduled. 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 scheduled care waiting times.

Waiting times for endoscopy procedures have been a particular focus for the Special Delivery Unit's Scheduled Care Team, with a target set for 2012 in the HSE Service Plan that no-one should wait more than 13 weeks for a routine endoscopy procedure. By year-end, the numbers waiting longer than 13 weeks for routine endoscopy had fallen by 99%, from 4,590 in December 2011 to 36 patients at the end of December 2012. This is a significant achievement which shows what can be done to tackle access. The progress made in 2012 does not mean all problems are solved, and 2013 will remain very challenging. However, the improvement reflects my commitment, and that of this Government, to ensuring patients can access the acute hospital services they need, when they need them.

Question No. 104 answered with Question No. 26.

Proposed Legislation

105. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health when the universal primary care Bill will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7496/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): 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. Primary legislation is required to give effect to the Government commitment to introduce a universal GP service without fees. 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. An annual budget of €15 million was provided for the first phase of the roll out of GP care without fees.

Question No. 106 answered with Question No. 87.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

107. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if he will advise the annual State spend on high tech drugs in each of the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012; if he will list the medications involved; if he will advise the savings he has negotiated and secured across each of the relevant expenditures; the way he will deliver the €10 million savings in the high tech drugs bill as outlined in the Health Service Executive National Service Plan 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7459/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The total cost of the High Tech Drug Scheme, for the years in question, is as follows: 2009 - €331.29 million; 2010 - €360.40 million; 2011 - €368.18 million; 2012 - €396.32 million.

High Tech Medicines are generally only prescribed or initiated by Consultants in hospitals.

They include anti-rejection drugs for transplant patients and medicines used in conjunction with chemotherapy. Approximately 30% of the expenditure is for rheumatology products. A further 10% is spent on treatments for multiple sclerosis. They are among the most innovative products added to schemes each year. A number of steps have been taken to reduce costs in recent years. In particular, the wholesale mark-up was reduced from 17.66% to 10% in 2009 and to 8% in 2011 by regulations under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009.

The HSE's National Service Plan has just been finalised for 2013. The HSE is now working with the relevant programme directors to profile their budgets appropriately. It is not possible at this stage to provide details of how individual savings measures will be profiled across 2013. However, I can assure the House that there will be no reduction in the availability of High Tech Drugs to patients who require them.

Thalidomide Victims Compensation

108. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the reason he has not met the Irish Thalidomide Survivors Society, despite repeated requests and promises that he would do so, with particular reference to the urgent need to implement a proposed care plan to meet their particular needs. [7441/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I met with the Irish Thalidomide Survivors Society in July 2011 and have been in correspondence with the Society since that meeting. The Government's main aim is to address the health and personal social care needs of thalidomide survivors living in Ireland. I have stated that I am willing to enter into discussions about a health care package on a non-statutory basis; an *ex gratia* payment having regard to current financial circumstances; and a statement to the Dáil recognising the challenges faced by survivors.

My position remains unchanged from that outlined in my letter to the Society in June 2012 in which I requested the society to proceed, in good faith, with a health care protocol which would involve:

- Appointing and training a multidisciplinary team (a lead consultant has been identified);
- Arranging a multidisciplinary health evaluation;
- Identifying and documenting individuals healthcare needs/issues;
- Developing plans to address their healthcare needs/issues.

The Irish Thalidomide Survivors Society has indicated that it is not willing to proceed with the health care protocol without the inclusion of other aspects of their needs being addressed in a wider care package, including those outside the remit of the health sector such as housing, heating, transport and clothing. The Society is also seeking the establishment of an independent agency with ring fenced funding to provide for all their needs. I am not in a position to meet the demands of the Irish Thalidomide Survivors Society as mandated by their membership and I await a response as to whether it is prepared to proceed with the health care protocol.

HSE Correspondence

109. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether the Health Service Executive is subject to the same parliamentary oversight as other State agencies

are by means of parliamentary questions; his views that there are significant delays in responses to parliamentary questions submitted to the HSE; his views that the lack of public access to replies is a matter of great concern; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7442/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I would like to assure the Deputy that responding to the information needs of the Oireachtas is a priority both for my Department and the Executive. The Health Service Executive is committed in their National Service Plan to answering 75% of directly referred Parliamentary Questions within a period of 15 working days from receipt. Performance in relation to this target is currently being met and will continue to be monitored closely by my Department.

In 2012 a total of 4,045 PQs were referred by my Department to the Health Service Executive for direct written response to members of the Oireachtas. 3,011 (74.5%) of those PQs were answered within the stipulated 15 day timeframe. A further 344 (8.5%) were answered within another 5 days. That is, 83% of all written PQs referred to the Health Service Executive were answered within 20 working days. Despite a doubling in volume of PQs in 2012 as against 2011, the “on time” performance increased by 16.5% from 58% to 74.5% and is now in line with the National Service Plan.

The Health Service Executive makes as many of its PQ responses as possible available on their website at www.hse.ie. As a significant proportion of PQs answered by the HSE relate to individual matters, under data protection legislation, they can not be made publically available. In 2012 the Health Service Executive uploaded a total of 759 responses to their public website. My Department holds regular meetings with the Health Service Executive’s Parliamentary Affairs Division to monitor response times and to emphasise the importance of issuing timely and comprehensive replies to Deputies.

Question No. 110 answered with Question No. 34.

Question No. 111 answered with Question No. 28.

Question No. 112 answered with Question No. 26.

Ministerial Meetings

113. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the issues discussed at his recent meeting with the Northern Ireland Secretary of State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7910/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I met the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Ms. Theresa Villiers in Farmleigh on 11 February, 2013. We discussed the current political situation in Northern Ireland noting the importance of political leadership in countering sectarianism. We discussed how the two governments might assist political leaders in Northern Ireland promote a genuinely shared society. We also discussed the security and public order situation in Northern Ireland and noted the ongoing close cooperation between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Garda Síochána.

On the issue of parades in Northern Ireland the Secretary of State and I agreed on the importance of supporting the institution of the Parades Commission and its decisions. We also discussed the cases of a number of prisoners held in Maghaberry Prison. We both welcomed the decision by the EU Heads of State and Government at the European Council on 7/8 February that €150 million will be allocated towards a new PEACE Programme. We also discussed the equine DNA issue noting that this is now a Europe wide problem and we welcomed the ongo-

ing cooperation and contact between the Irish Food Safety Agency (FSAI) and the Food Safety Agency in NI and the UK.

EU Funding

114. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the funding that will be provided for the new PEACE programme; the level of funding to be provided both North and South; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7912/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): At the meeting of the European Council in Brussels on 7/8 February, it was decided by the EU Heads of State and Government that a total of €150 million will be allocated towards the PEACE Programme. The final size of the next PEACE programme, which would also include funding from Ireland and the UK, will be determined following a programme planning process.

Departmental Expenditure

115. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the total amount spent on outsourced security services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8475/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The amount expended by my Department in respect of outsourced security services in Ireland for 2012 was €639,063. The services were provided by G4S.

Written Answers Nos. 116-133

Departmental Expenditure

116. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8489/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): My department spent €504,518 on outsourced cleaning services in the State in 2012. The services were provided for office premises occupied by my department in 10 buildings. The companies which provided these services were:

ECO Group Services

Rentokil Initial Limited

E Pak Industries

Spring Grove Services Limited

George Cook and Company Limited

Abbey W.R.S. Waste Management

Panda Waste

The City Bin Company

Cannon Hygienic Products

Keywaste management Limited

Mr. Binman Limited

Thornton Recycling

Cullen and Bohan Limited

Special Care Laundry

Fiber Seal

Parkside Ireland Limited

Household Charge Collection

117. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will introduce a system for persons to pay the household tax in instalments in view of the fact that he is not taking in the ability to pay clause on property; if he will allow persons who do not wish to defer, but have limited means, to pay in instalments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7791/13]

120. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will ensure that a wide range of instalment and payment options will be made available to persons who are liable to pay the property tax. [7775/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 117 and 120 together.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that, commencing in March 2013, residential property owners will receive their Local Property Tax (LPT) Return from Revenue together with an LPT booklet, which will provide details of the payment options available to pay the tax. The LPT Return must be submitted and payment details provided to Revenue by 7 May, if using the paper return, and by 28 May if using Revenue's online facility.

I am further advised by the Revenue Commissioners that a wide range of payment options is available to liable persons (including those who qualify for deferral but who wish to pay the tax), which will allow them to pay their LPT liability in full or by way of phased payments. Payment of LPT can be made in full by way of a Single Debit Authority, which is the equivalent of an electronic cheque; by using a debit or credit card online; or in cash through approved payment service providers. There will also be an option to pay the tax for 2013 in equal instalments over the period 1 July to 31 December 2013. Instalment payments can be made by way of deduction at source from employment, occupational pension income or from certain payments made by the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, by direct debit or also in cash through approved payment service providers.

I am further informed by Revenue that, for 2013, the Single Debit Authority payment will be deducted from the nominated bank account on 21 July 2013. The timing of phased payments depends on the particular payment option chosen such that payments made by way of deduction at source will commence from 1 July 2013 onwards, whereas payments made by direct debit

will commence on 15 July 2013 and will be deducted on the 15th day of each month thereafter and phased payments by cash through a payment service provider should be spread equally by the property owner over the period 1 July to 31 December 2013.

The Revenue Commissioners also advise that where any of the phased payment options is chosen, no additional administration or interest charge is imposed by Revenue. Normal transactional charges, however, may be levied by the property owner's financial institution or by a payment service provider where the property owner chooses to make their payment via a Single Debit Authority, a debit or credit card, a direct debit or by way of cash payments.

Finally, I am satisfied that the range of payment options provided will allow liable persons choose whatever payment option suits their own particular circumstances.

Property Taxation Exemptions

118. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Finance his plans in relation to exempting from the property tax those that have experienced continuous flooding of their homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7805/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I refer the Deputy to my answer to Parliamentary Question No. 291 of 5 February 2013 (6061/13). The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 sets out in detail how the tax is to be administered and how a residential property is to be valued for LPT purposes. There is no specific exemption from the Local Property Tax for the type of cases outlined in the question from the Deputy. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that Local Property Tax (LPT) is a self-assessment tax so in the first instance it is a matter for the property owner to calculate the tax due based on his or her assessment of the market value of the property. The impact of serious and regular flooding on a property would be one of the factors that a property owner would take into account in valuing their property.

In addition, one of the advantages of the banding system of values provided for in the legislation is to remove the need for precision in relation to the market value, except for properties worth over €1million. The Revenue Commissioners are preparing valuation guidance and developing a guide to assist liable persons in assessing the value of their property which will take account of location. Where these guidelines are used honestly, together with a liable person's own knowledge of their property, the property valuation will not be challenged by Revenue in accordance with its normal Customer Service Charter.

Tax Reliefs Availability

119. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider implementing a tax relief regime for micro-cider producers similar to the reliefs available for microbreweries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7772/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Article 4 of Directive 92/83/EEC allows for a lower rate to be applied to beer produced by small breweries. This provision is however specific to beer, and there is no corresponding provision to cover other fermented beverages, including cider. Under EU law (Art 13(2) of Council Directive 92/83/EEC) we are obliged to apply the same rate of excise duty to all other fermented beverages, which include cider. Ireland has however used the option under paragraph (3) of that article, to apply two lower rates to cider below 8.5% vol and 6% vol. A reduced rate of tax for low strength cider was also introduced, with effect from 15 October 2008, for cider of a strength not exceeding 2.8% alcohol

by volume, as provided for under Article 5 of the Directive. Under the current EU legislative framework, a reduced rate could not be introduced for cider produced by small operators.

While there is an exemption for small scale cider producers in the UK of up to 7000 hectolitres, I understand that this exemption pre-dates the Directive.

A cider manufacturer's licence is also required for the production of cider on a commercial basis under the Finance (1909-1910) Act 1910.

Question No. 120 answered with Question No. 117.

Tax Code

121. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will explore the option of a reduction in capital gains tax which in turn may result in a increase in activity in this sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7777/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Capital gains tax (CGT) is a transaction tax and a liability can only arise following a transaction giving rise to a chargeable gain. Where there is no transaction, there is no tax. Lowering the rate does not guarantee an increase in the number of transactions. The drop in the CGT yield over recent years can be attributed to declining asset values and a reduction in the number of property and share transactions. In order to protect and enhance the yield it was necessary to increase the CGT rate in Budget and Finance Bill 2013 to 33%. As well as required reductions in expenditure to reduce our budget deficit, some increases in taxation are also necessary. Increasing tax on capital is less damaging for the economy than increasing taxes on income. I do not propose to reduce the rate of CGT for the reasons outlined.

Pension Provisions

122. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding pension policies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7853/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I assume that the question refers to my Budget 2013 speech, when I announced that I would make provision in Finance Bill 2013 for persons making Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) used to supplement their main scheme retirement benefits to withdraw up to 30% of the value of those contributions. Any amounts withdrawn will be subject to tax at the individual's marginal rate. The option will be available for 3 years from the passing of the Finance Bill. These provisions were included in Finance Bill 2013, which was published yesterday. This is a restricted measure which will enable rather than incentivize certain individuals to access part of their pension savings beyond their regular or compulsory pension contributions. I do not wish to damage future pension provision and it is important that individuals continue to provide for their retirement. For these reasons, I have no plans to extend the measure beyond AVCs.

Tax Yield

123. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Finance the total amount of tax collected annually by Revenue from benefit in kind taxation of health insurance policies provided to employees by their employers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7863/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that information in respect of benefits-in-kind arising from payment of medical insurance premia is not captured in such a way as to provide a basis for compiling the information sought by the Deputy. Details of taxable benefits are required to be returned in aggregate form only on the P35 return so it is not possible to separately identify different types of benefits.

Tax Rebates

124. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will extend in the forthcoming finance Bill the excise rebate scheme for road hauliers announced in budget 2013 to benefit passenger transport operators; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7866/13]

126. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if a rebate scheme will be provided in the finance Bill and if the rebate will be 13 cent per litre or more; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7876/13]

153. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will extend in the forthcoming finance Bill the excise rebate scheme for road hauliers announced in the budget 2013 to benefit passenger transport operators; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7991/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 124, 126 and 153 together.

The proposal to introduce an auto-diesel excise duty relief for licensed road hauliers that I announced in the Budget was, initially, confined to licensed and tax compliant hauliers.

However having received a number of submissions from, and on behalf of, private coach operators seeking to have this relief extended to them, Deputies will now be aware, having seen the Finance Bill, published yesterday, that I have extended the relief to the licensed passenger transport sector. The maximum amount of the relief will be 7.5 cents per litre and will be price dependent.

Personal Public Service Numbers

125. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Finance if he will ensure that the Revenue Commissioners will provide a verifiable PPS number to the National Transport Office to enable a person (details supplied) in County Cork who has been unable to work since 1 January to return to making their living; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7872/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by Revenue that they have made contact with the National Transport Authority regarding this case. The taxpayer in question is in possession of a valid PPSN as an employee, but is not recorded as being self-employed. This led to some confusion which has now been resolved, and I understand that a renewed licence has issued to the taxpayer.

Question No. 126 answered with Question No. 123.

Property Taxation Exemptions

127. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance if he will clarify whether or not a pensioner couple will be permitted either an exemption or a deferral of the local property tax in circumstances where they have a nominal income which is in excess of the threshold to allow for a deferral of the local property tax but who are availing of the nursing home support scheme under which the pension income of the nursing home patient is reduced by 80%, thereby significantly reducing their net income and rendering the local property tax unaffordable; and the action he is taking to ensure that some kind of discretionary element is built into the local property tax regime so that exceptional cases may be examined. [7881/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that it is not possible to give a definitive reply based on the information supplied by the Deputy. However, by way of general information, the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 provides for a number of specific exemptions from the Local Property Tax (LPT) as well as the possibility of deferring the charge in certain cases of inability to pay. Under Section 5 of the Act an exemption may be obtained where a property that was previously occupied by a person as his or her sole or main residence has been vacated by the person for 12 months or more due to long term mental or physical infirmity. An exemption may also apply where the period is less than 12 months, if a doctor is satisfied that the person is unlikely at any stage to return to the property. In both cases, the exemption only applies where the property is not occupied by any other person.

I am also informed by the Revenue Commissioners that where a residential property is the sole or main residence of a liable person who has estimated gross income from all sources of less than €15,000 for a single person or €25,000 for a couple, the liable person(s) will be eligible to apply for full deferral of the LPT charge. To determine whether deferral applies for 2013, liable persons are required to estimate on 1 May 2013 what their total gross income for 2013 is likely to be. Gross income from all sources means income before any deductions, allowances or reliefs that may be taken into account for income tax purposes and includes income that is exempt from income tax and income received from the Department of Social Protection.

In addition, owner-occupiers will qualify for deferral of 50% of the LPT liability where their estimated gross income from all sources is less than €25,000 if they are single and €35,000 for a couple. The balance of 50% of the tax must be paid.

The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 also contains a number of specific deferral provisions that cater for cases of low income and significant mortgage burden.

I appreciate that there will be some property owners who may find themselves unable to pay LPT but who do not qualify for a deferral under the existing provisions. For this reason, I have brought forward enabling legislation in the Finance (Local Property Tax)(Amendment) Bill 2013, which was published yesterday, to allow for a measure of discretion to be exercised by the Revenue Commissioners in deciding whether to grant a deferral in particular circumstances. The detail of how this type of discretionary deferral will operate and the criteria that will be used to determine eligibility is not set out in this Bill, but instead, will be set out in guidelines that will be published by the Revenue Commissioners before they commence corresponding with liable persons about LPT in March 2013. The type of circumstances that will apply are where a liable person is unable without excessive hardship to pay LPT when it becomes payable as a consequence of a significant and unexpected financial loss or expense. This particular deferral will operate on a different basis to the existing deferral arrangements. It will not automatically be available on the making of a valid claim. Instead, a liable person must apply in writing to the Revenue Commissioners for the deferral and must meet whatever criteria will be set out in the guidelines to be published by the Revenue Commissioners.

Credit Availability

128. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance if he will set out in tabular form based on geographical regions, Dublin north west, south east and so on, new lending to small and medium enterprises in the past two years. [7895/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The pillar banks report to my Department and to the Credit Review Office on credit on a regional basis but this is commercially sensitive information and I am not in a position to release it. The Central Bank does not publish information on credit on a regional basis. In his tenth quarterly report published on 11 February, the Credit Reviewer said “I have observed no geographic region or trade sector being relatively adversely affected by this contraction in these two banks.”

IBRC Loans

129. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the total number of clients with loans outstanding to Irish Banking Resolution Corporation; the number of loans associated with these clients; the location by country of these loans; the gross value of the loans at origination; their current book value at IBRC; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7896/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware, on 7 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.

The Bank/ Special Liquidator is therefore not in a position to provide further information as requested by the Deputy.

It should be noted however that detailed disclosures regarding IBRC’s loan books can be found in the Bank’s last published Annual Report & Accounts as at 31 December 2011 and the 2012 Interim Accounts. I thank the Deputy for his understanding in what is a crucial phase in the liquidation.

IBRC Liquidation

130. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the projected time horizon over which claims by deposit holders at the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation under the eligible liabilities guarantee would have been paid had the institution not been put into liquidation; the potential maximum cost of such claims; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7897/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised that the deposits held by IBRC at the end of January were €323m. Had IBRC not been liquidated I would expect that these deposits would have been paid in line with their expected contractual maturities. Eligible deposits are covered by the Deposit Guarantee Scheme and the Eligible Liabilities Guarantee schemes. Eligible deposits in IBRC of up to €100,000 for an individual or €200,000

for a joint account are protected by the DGS scheme. Eligible deposits above this are protected by the ELG scheme. The Special Liquidators will provide details of eligible depositors and account balances to the Central Bank. Payments will then be made by cheque within 20 working days of the appointment of the Special Liquidators and will be sent to depositors at the address held by IBRC. The Central Bank will keep customers of IBRC informed by providing regular updates on its website. Claimants covered by the ELG scheme must submit a claim to the NTMA. Claims forms can be found on their website at www.ntma.ie.

IBRC Liquidation

131. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the time horizon over which the disposal of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation loan book would maximise the return to the State; if he is concerned that a fire sale of the assets may result in the State missing out on a recovery in asset prices in subsequent years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7899/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy will appreciate that it is not possible to be specific in relation to the time horizon for the disposal of IBRC assets. A process has been prescribed which will ensure the optimum value is advanced in the disposal of the assets. 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. Third parties including loan counterparties and other financial institutions will be given the opportunity to bid for specific portfolios as part of an open and transparent sales process. If after the independent valuation exercise, the value of the assets sold by the Special Liquidators is not sufficient to compensate NAMA for the amount it paid for the net IBRC debt owed to the Central Bank, then the Minister for Finance will reimburse NAMA for the shortfall. However if the value of the assets is sufficient to repay that debt in full, the Special Liquidator will retain surplus assets for the benefit of other unsecured creditors. This process will ensure that a fire sale of assets will not occur. An assessment of the loans will be made by the Special Liquidator and a decision made in relation to how best to maximise the value of the loans.

Promissory Note Negotiations

132. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will set out in tabular form the expected impact of the deal on the promissory notes on the projected end of year stock of general government debt and ratio of general government debt to GDP in each year from 2013 to 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7900/13]

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%. 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. The table sets out general government debt (GGD) forecasts for the three years 2013 – 2015 based upon no policy change.

Three years is the standard forecast horizon used throughout the EU in budgetary publications and covers the medium term budgetary framework. Accordingly, when the Department

publishes the *Stability Programme Update* in April next it will contain an official forecast for the period out to 2016.

General Government Debt Impact	2013	2014	2015
(€M)	-	-	-
GGD per Budget 2013 document	203,500	209,200	211,900
Change in GGD in year	1,350	-1,050	-1,100
Cumulative change in GGD	1,350	300	-800
GGD post-transaction	204,850	209,500	211,100
Pre-Transaction Underlying GGB/ Nominal GDP	121.30%	120.20%	116.80%
Post-Transaction Underlying GGB/ Nominal GDP	122.10%	120.30%	116.40%
Change	0.80%	0.20%	-0.40%

Note that the above table 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 are 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>

Promissory Note Negotiations

133. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of the transactions costs to be incurred in 2013 in relation to the revised promissory note arrangements; the actions he proposes to mitigate these costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7901/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Eligible Liabilities Guarantee (“ELG”) scheme cost is expected to be incurred in 2013. It is estimated that there could be payments under the ELG of c. €0.9 to €1.1 billion. The ELG scheme provides an Irish State guarantee for specific issuances of eligible debt securities by participating institutions and for specific deposits placed with participating institutions. In assessing the impact of this liquidation, it has been assumed that ELG costs of €1.0 billion arise in 2013, i.e., the midpoint of the circa €0.9 billion to €1.1 billion estimated range. There may be a further cost for the Exchequer if it is necessary to make up any difference that might arise between the consideration paid by NAMA for IBRC’s assets and the valuation placed on those assets by the Special Liquidators:

-If the value of the assets sold is not sufficient to compensate NAMA for the bonds it has

issued it will be necessary to reimburse NAMA for the shortfall.

-If the value of the assets is greater than the net outstanding borrowings under the Facility Deed, the Special Liquidators will retain the surplus assets for the benefit of unsecured creditors.

Any remaining assets after the unwinding of all secured liabilities will be available for the benefit of the pool of unsecured creditors (including for the Minister for Finance arising from payments made under guarantees, unguaranteed bondholders, suppliers, and sundry liabilities). Whether payments are made to unsecured creditors will depend on the disposal value of IBRC's assets.

Written Answers Nos. 134-151

NAMA Operations

134. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he intends to revise corporate governance oversight process in respect of National Asset Management Agency in view of its increased portfolio of assets and the revised promissory note arrangements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7902/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): There is a robust corporate governance oversight process in place in respect of the National Assets Management Agency. The Agency's corporate governance oversight process is derived from the NAMA Act 2009, which includes provision for codes of practice and public accountability. The NAMA Board has also adopted the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The corporate governance oversight process in respect of the National Assets Management Agency will be kept under review as the IBRC liquidation progresses.

IBRC Liquidation

135. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the expected costs under the deposit guarantee scheme of the liquidation of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7903/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): It is understood 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 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. The total DGS pay-out is likely to be significantly lower than this figure, however, 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 deposits.

Government Bonds

136. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the initial floating interest rate coupon on each tranche of Government bonds issued under the revised promissory note arrangements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7904/13]

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%. On the 8th February 2013 the NTMA announced that following the agreement between the Government and the ECB, it had, at the direction of the Minister for Finance, completed the exchange with the Central Bank of Ireland of Irish Government Bonds for the Promissory Notes previously held by IBRC. As a result, the Minister for Finance's liability under the Promissory Notes has been discharged and the Promissory Notes cancelled.

For this purpose eight new Floating Rate Treasury Bonds for a total amount of €25 billion have been issued with maturities ranging from 25 to 40 years. The bonds will pay interest every six months (June and December) based on the 6-month Euribor interest rate plus an interest margin which averages 2.63% across the eight issues. Six month Euribor is currently 0.372%.

The initial floating interest rate coupon on each of the 8 tranches is as follows:

- a 5 year bond of €2bn maturing in 2038 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.50%;
- a 28 year bond of €2bn maturing in 2041 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.53%;
- a 30 year bond of €2bn maturing in 2043 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.57%;
- a 32 year bond of €3bn maturing in 2045 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.60%;
- a 34 year bond of €3bn maturing in 2047 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.62%;
- a 36 year bond of €3bn maturing in 2049 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.65%;
- a 38 year bond of €5bn maturing in 2051 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.67%; and
- a 40 year bond of €5bn maturing in 2053 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.68%.

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/>.

Promissory Note Issues

137. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the impact of a 1% rise in the Irish spread over six month EURIBOR on the projected savings under the revised promissory note arrangements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7905/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I can advise the Deputy that eight new Floating Rate Treasury Bonds have been issued to discharge the IBRC Promissory Notes liability consisting of:-

- a 25 year bond of €2bn maturing in 2038 with a spread of 2.50%;
- a 28 year bond of €2bn maturing in 2041 with a spread of 2.53%;
- a 30 year bond of €2bn maturing in 2043 with a spread of 2.57%;
- a 32 year bond of €3bn maturing in 2045 with a spread of 2.60%;
- a 34 year bond of €3bn maturing in 2047 with a spread of 2.62%;
- a 36 year bond of €3bn maturing in 2049 with a spread of 2.65%;
- a 38 year bond of €5bn maturing in 2051 with a spread of 2.67%; and
- a 40 year bond of €5bn maturing in 2053 with a spread 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 credit spreads on the bonds over Euribor were set on the date of issuance and as such will not vary in the future. Given the fixed nature of the spreads, a 1% increase in the Irish credit spread over six month Euribor will not impact upon the interest payment made by the State or the income received on the bonds by the Central Bank of Ireland. However, this may have mark-to-market implications with regard to the bonds held by the Central Bank of Ireland.

Central Bank of Ireland Issues

138. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the circumstances under which the Central Bank of Ireland will be permitted to exchange a portion of the new floating rate bonds issued under the revised promissory note arrangement for fixed coupon bonds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7906/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank will sell these bonds but only when such a sale is not disruptive to financial stability. The limits of the option to exchange will be the amounts of the mandatory sales and the option lies with the Central Bank as a right but not an obligation. 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.

IBRC Liquidation

139. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the implications he expects arising from the liquidation of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation on outstanding legal actions against the institution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7907/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The effect of the IBRC Act was to place an immediate stay on claims against IBRC, including counter claims which do not give rise to a right of set off. New proceedings against IBRC can only be commenced with the leave of the Court. On the seventh of March the High Court is to consider submissions in respect of this issue and rule on whether the Court has a discretion to lift the stays placed on ongoing actions by operation of the Act. Litigants who succeed in actions against IBRC will rank as unsecured creditors in the liquidation. If a claimant is also a debtor of IBRC, and that debt is sold to NAMA or a third party buyer, such buyer will acquire that debt subject to that claimant's pre-existing valid and enforceable claims and counterclaims that give rise to an enforceable right of set-off against the debt.

IBRC Liquidation

140. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the implications for loans outstanding to former directors of Anglo Irish Bank and Irish Nationwide arising from the liquidation of Irish Bank Resolution Corporation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7908/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware of all debts owing to IBRC, including loans outstanding to former Directors, still remain due and payable in accordance with their terms. This includes loans that were advanced to former directors of Anglo Irish Bank and Irish Nationwide. All loan payments should continue to be made and all debts to IBRC remain due and payable in accordance with their terms. One of the objectives of the Special Liquidators will be to ensure the continued collection of all outstanding debts.

IBRC Liquidation

141. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his estimate of the amounts owed by the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation to unsecured creditors at the time of liquidation; if the IBRC loan books are sold at face value if the liquidator will be in a position to pay all unsecured creditors in full; his views on the situation in which losses were imposed by a State owned business on Irish suppliers of goods and services while no losses are taken by senior bondholders at that institution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7909/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware, on 7th 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.

The Special Liquidators are currently agreeing all the creditors' claims and it is therefore too early in the liquidation to ascertain the level of unsecured creditors.

To the extent that there are proceeds available after repayment in full of the NAMA debt these proceeds will be applied to the remaining creditors of IBRC who have not been paid. The Special Liquidators can confirm that the Companies Act's priorities will apply in the liquidation process. The proceeds from the disposal of IBRC's assets will be used to repay creditors subject to the normal legal priorities.

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

IBRC Liquidation

142. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if all restructuring arrangements entered into by the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation prior to its liquidation with its customers in respect of mortgage arrears will now remain in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7957/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): All restructuring arrangements entered into by Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Limited prior to its liquidation remain in place. The contractual terms and conditions of mortgage customers will not change as a result of the appointment of the Special Liquidators and all debts owing to IBRC (In Special Liquidation) remain due and enforceable.

IBRC Liquidation

143. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance in the context of the liquidation of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, the current status of the IBRC, pre-2011, defined contribution retirement savings plan; the impact of the liquidation on the benefits that will be paid to members of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7958/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Unfortunately my Department has been unable to obtain the information requested by the Deputy in the time available. I will write to the Deputy directly with the information as soon as it becomes available.

IBRC Staff

144. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of the termination payments that will be made to the former CEO of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, in liquidation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7959/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Following the liquidation, all employment contracts in the Republic of Ireland have been terminated, including that of the former CEO, Mr Mike Aynsley. Mr Aynsley is entitled to apply for a statutory redundancy payment, a payment in respect of accrued but unused annual leave and a statutory notice payment, subject to the limits prescribed by statute.

IBRC Staff

145. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide detail of the termination payments that will be made to former senior executives at the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, in liquidation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7960/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Following the liquidation, all employment contracts in the Republic of Ireland have been terminated, including those of the former Senior Executives. The Senior Executives are entitled to apply for a statutory redundancy payment, a payment in respect of accrued but unused annual leave and a statutory notice payment, subject to the limits prescribed by statute.

Corporation Tax

146. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Finance if there was an effective corporate tax rate of 10%, what would the total tax take from corporation tax have been for 2010, 2011 and 2012; what it would be in 2013 and 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7961/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): All companies in Ireland pay the standard 12.5% rate on their profits which are generated in Ireland. A higher 25% rate applies in respect of investment, rental and other non-trading profits and profits from certain petroleum, mining or land dealing activities. In a number of answers to previous Parliamentary Questions on this issue I have repeatedly stated that there is no agreed international methodology for calculating the ‘effective rate’ of corporation tax. With that in mind, I am unsure as to the premise of the Deputy’s question which seems to be that Ireland has an effective rate that is lower than 10%.

I am aware of recent media reports which refer to the ways that some companies structure their international tax affairs to minimise their tax costs, and the fact that some of these reports make reference to Irish companies being part of these structures. I understand that some of these reports have suggested that some companies in multinational groups pay Irish corporation tax at rates that are significantly lower than 12.5%.

At this point it is important to state clearly that such companies are not paying a low rate of Irish tax – as already stated all companies in Ireland pay the standard 12.5% rate on their profits which are generated in Ireland. The reports concerned appear to have incorrectly attributed to Ireland profits that represent the return due to assets in other jurisdictions, owned by group companies that are not resident in Ireland.

It is incorrect to relate the 12.5% corporation tax rate to both the profits of the Irish-resident group companies *and* the profits of foreign-resident group companies— which are not profits chargeable to Irish corporation tax. By mixing up the Irish profits and the foreign profits of multinational groups like this, these reports can produce an average tax rate for the companies concerned that is very significantly lower than 12.5% — and an incorrect inference that the full

Irish profits are not being charged.

IBRC Liquidation

147. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will confirm the new contact details of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation in special liquidation for the former bank's mortgage customers. [7968/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I can advise the Deputy that a Free-phone number, 1800 303 632 has been in place in recent days to advise customers on the immediate impact of the liquidation on their loans and deposits. Subsequent to this, IBRC have reopened their communications lines for customers and the Special Liquidators took over the aforementioned Freephone number from my Department on Tuesday of this week.

Tax Compliance

148. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the number of reviews of taxpayers that have been undertaken by the Revenue Commissioners in each of the years since the self-assessment system was adopted; the number of these where a discrepancy was identified; the amount recovered from such cases; if he will outline the way the Revenue Commissioners are minimising the risk of fraud and error arising from the self-assessment method; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7979/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that all developed countries operate some form of self-assessment system for their business taxpayers. The Irish self-assessment system ensures that there are tight controls in place for tax return filing rates which are borne out by the timely filing rates of 98% for large cases, 95% for medium cases and 80% for all other cases, across all taxes. This strategy is supported by a comprehensive compliance programme of audits, risk management interventions, special investigations and prosecutions. I am further advised that, as Self-Assessment for income tax was introduced in 1988 and for corporation tax in 1989 and as the data is not maintained in a suitable format, it is not possible to provide all the details sought by the Deputy without an extensive examination of Revenue records. However, they have supplied me with the Tables below, which give comprehensive data for seven years from **2006 to 2012**. The various interventions shown are not confined to direct taxes, and would include VAT, Excise etc. where relevant.

Type of Intervention	Numbers Completed and Yield	Numbers Completed and Yield	Numbers Completed and Yield
-	(€m)	(€m)	(€m)
-	2008	2007	2006
Comprehensive (All taxhead)	3,904 (262)	3,875 (344.5)	4,127 (436.2)
Single Tax/Duty Audits	6,082 (184)	6,603 (151.6)	6,305 (133.5)
Multi Tax/ Duty Audits	2,065 (65)	2,206 (71.2)	1,757 (56.2)
Single Issue/ Transaction Audits	1,363 (59)	1,624 (120.3)	1,437 (23.8)
Total Audits	13,414 (570)	14,308 (687.6)	13,626 (649.7)

Assurance Checks	345,452 (63)	237,626 (46.2)	176,064 (42.1)
Total Interventions	358,866 (633)	251,934 (733.8)	189,690 (691.8)

Type of Intervention	Completed 2011	Yield	Completed 2010	Yield	Completed 2009	Yield
-	-	€m	-	€m	-	€m
Comprehensive (All tax-heads)	4,717	183.6	4,209	197.1	4,353	279
Multi Tax/Duty Audits	1,236	61.6	1,374	53.6	1,735	63
Single Tax/Duty Audits	3,345	126.9	3,841	111.6	5,053	163
Single Issue/Transaction Audits	1,768	68.4	1,584	72.4	1,278	97
Total Audit Interventions	11,066	440.5	11,088	434.7	12,419	602
Assurance Checks		81.3		58.0		66
Total Interventions (Audit & Assurance)		521.8		492.7		668

2012

Audit Interventions	Completed 2012	Yield 2012
-	-	€m
Comprehensive (All taxheads)	4,687	181.8
Multi Tax/Duty Audits	985	34.7
Single Tax/Duty Audits	2,624	99.7
Single Issue/Transaction Audits	769	42.9
PAYE Compliance Interventions	29,881	23.2
Risk Management Interventions	125,073	87.7
Assurance Checks	373,803	22.4

Total Compliance Interventions (Audit, Risk & Assurance)	537,822	492.4
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The Commissioners also advise that these figures, year-on-year, are not directly comparable due to a re-labelling of compliance interventions and the continuing evolution of their compliance programmes to reflect changes in the economy and the efficient use of resources. Not all Revenue interventions take the form of formal audits or investigations and in accordance with their risk-based approach cases are selected for intervention based on the presence of various risk indicators. Each Revenue intervention is intended to be in the form which is most efficient in terms of time and resources, and which imposes the least cost on the taxpayer, whilst addressing the perceived risk and consequently Revenue carry out Risk Management Interventions, which take the form of Aspect Queries and Profile Interviews.

Revenue’s objective in case working is to ensure that each case (taxpayer or business) is fully compliant with their legal obligations in relation to the keeping of proper books and records, the timely and accurate submission of required declarations and the prompt payment of tax and duty liabilities. This approach ensures that, as far as possible, the self-assessment system operates effectively and minimises instances of fraud or mistake.

The selection of cases in which to intervene is a critical step in Revenue’s compliance programme and case selection derives from a variety of sources. In addition to specific projects like the shadow economy project, Revenue also uses extensive third party data, good citizen’s reports and other intelligence to drive its compliance interventions. In the past two years, Revenue has also been using advanced analytics to help it identify indicators of fraud or error from taxpayer’s filings and they are regarded as a leading tax administration in the deployment of these technologies.

I am also informed that a major focus of Revenue’s activities in relation to self-assessed cash businesses is to tackle shadow economy activities including the suppression of sales, wages and income by registered businesses and fraudulent repayment claims. It is a multi-faceted issue that requires a co-ordinated and varied response.

Revenue tackles the problem of the shadow economy through its range of compliance and audit interventions including through targeted special projects. Case interventions are undertaken based on Revenue’s assessment of compliance risks, the level of those risks and other relevant information available. Revenue is using a wide range of methodologies to identify those operating in the shadow economy and is deploying the full range of compliance interventions.

The Deputy will be aware of the continuing strengthening of legislation to provide for a robust framework within which the Revenue Commissioners may tackle tax evasion, including recent provisions relating to the making of returns of transactions by merchant acquirers, and other payment settlement organisations, to the Revenue Commissioners and Regulations, introduced in 2011, requiring Government Departments and State Bodies to supply details to the Revenue Commissioners of payments made.

Revenue investigations have also detected the use of computer programmes or electronic devices to alter or conceal sales records. To counteract these risks, legislation was also enacted in 2011 providing penalties for the possession, use or supply of automated sales suppression devices known as “zappers” for the purpose of evading tax.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the results from all the various projects undertaken by Revenue are reflected in the general audit and compliance results from audits, assurance checks, and other risk management intervention which are published in Revenue’s

Annual Report. The high level of success in securing settlements is a reflection of the targeted approach used by Revenue which is to focus its compliance resources on the areas of greatest risk. An associated strategy is to minimise the number of contacts with compliant taxpayers.

I am confident that the Revenue Commissioners have a very clear focus to target and confront those who do not comply, as set out in their Statement of Strategy for 2011 to 2013.

Hospital Equipment

149. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance if the use by hospital consultants of public health facilities for work for which they charge private patient fees is taxable as a benefit-in-kind and, if not, the reason for same and his estimate of the yield that would arise if it were. [7980/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): A benefit in kind charge under the provisions of Section 118 TCA 1997 arises where an employer incurs expense in the provision of living or other accommodation, entertainment, domestic or other services, or other benefits or facilities of whatever nature. The charge is based on the amount of the expense that is not made good to the employer by the employee. Facilities provided to hospital consultants for use in their private practice can include equipment, premises and staff. Determining the expense incurred by the employer in the provision of these facilities is particularly difficult. For example, the value of the use of hospital premises is defined as the annual rent that might be expected to be obtained on a yearly letting. In the case of a specialised building such as a hospital this would be difficult to ascertain. In the case of other assets such as machinery the value of the use of the machinery is taken to be 5% of its market value. Again, this would be difficult to determine given the nature of the equipment in a hospital.

Hospital facilities are not provided solely to enable the consultants to carry on private practice in the hospitals concerned. Clearly, the primary purpose of the provision of the facilities is to enable the consultant to treat public patients.

The difficulty in determining a benefit in kind charge is further compounded by the fact that the facilities can be shared by a number of consultants to varying degrees and that usage can vary depending on the availability of a consultant and the extent to which his or her specialist services may be required. Taking all these factors together it is difficult to establish for each individual consultant a charge that reflects the benefit received. Given that benefit in kind is operated via the PAYE system attempting to quantify a charge would impose a significant burden on payroll departments.

The application of benefit in kind in these circumstances is complicated but I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that this particular issue is under active consideration.

In the circumstances it is not possible to estimate the yield from the imposition of a benefit in kind charge.

Insurance Coverage

150. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 254 of 29 January 2013, if he will intervene with insurance companies with reference to the provision of flood cover for persons who previously made a flood claim under their insurance, but have since relocated to a new home and cannot secure flood insurance as a result of

their previous claim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7981/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As indicated in my reply of 29 January 2013, the issue of provision of new flood cover or the renewal of existing flood cover is a commercial matter for insurance companies, which has to be based on a proper assessment of the risks they are accepting. The Deputy will recall that these are often considered on a case by case basis and it is important to be clear that neither the Government nor the Central Bank has any influence over this matter. Consequently I am not in a position to direct insurance companies to provide flood cover to specific individuals. My Department has however made enquiries with the Irish Insurance Federation (IIF) about the provision of flood cover in the circumstance you have described. While indicating that the decision to provide flood cover or not is a matter for each insurance company, their general view is that if the new home is in a low risk area from a flooding perspective then a good broker should be able to place the cover with an insurance company.

Departmental Expenditure

151. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the total amount spent on outsourced security services in each Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [7987/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In response to the Deputy's question my Department provides shared accommodation services to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. In the period January 2012 to 31 December 2012 no money was spent on outsourced security services in respect of buildings occupied by staff of either the Department. Spend on outsourcing of security services in other Departments is a matter for each Department and subject to oversight not by the Department of Finance but rather the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the total spend on the provision of outsourced security services for Revenue in 2012 was €2,064,223. The following companies provided these services:

Sovereign Security Ltd.
Night Eyes Security Service
GGL Security
Group 4 Security
S-Security Group Ltd.
Lodge Service (Dublin) Ltd
ISS Ireland Ltd
Noonan Services Ltd
Orbit Security

Written Answers Nos. 152 - 169

Departmental Expenditure

152. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in each Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [7988/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In response to the Deputy's question my Department provides shared accommodation services to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. In respect of the period 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2012 €214,309 was spent on outsourced cleaning services in respect of premises occupied in Dublin by both the Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform staff. The costs also include outsourced cleaning services in respect of the Department of Finances decentralized office in Tullamore. Expenditure on outsourced cleaning services in other Departments is a matter for each Department and subject to oversight not by the Department of Finance but rather the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the total spend on the provision of outsourced cleaning services for Revenue in 2012 was €1,842,251. The following companies provided these services:

Ailesbury Contract Cleaning
OCS One Complete Solution
Cavan Ind & Cleaning Services
Emerald Contract Cleaners
Grosvenor Cleaning Services
ISS Ireland Ltd
Neylons Maintenance d Ltd
Noonan Services Ltd

Question No. 153 answered with Question No. 124.

IBRC Staff

154. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of ex-staff of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation who have been re-hired by the special liquidator or the National Asset Management Agency. [7992/13]

159. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the way the percentages of ex-staff in the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation have been re-hired by the special liquidator or the National Asset Management Agency in the following categories: those who were earning less than €100,000; those who were earning between €100,000 and €200,000; those who were earning between €200,000 and €300,000; those who were earning between €300,000 and €400,000; those who were earning between €400,000 and €500,000; and those who were earning over €500,000. [8048/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 154 and 159 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, on 7 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.

Following the liquidation, all employment contracts in the Republic of Ireland have been terminated and the Special Liquidators have confirmed that the majority of staff have been re-employed on short term contracts to assist in the liquidation.

The Bank/Special Liquidator is not in a position to provide further information at this point in time.

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

IBRC Staff

155. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the numbers in each grade, clerical, risk officer, executive and so on, of the staff in Irish Bank Resolution Corporation when it was liquidated.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7993/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware, on 7 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.

Bonds Redemption

156. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a full analysis of the new bonds, which it is proposed to replace the promissory notes, to include the projected annual capital and interest payments from the State for the full life of the bonds; the projected annual cash return to the State from the Central Bank of Ireland associated with these payments, that is, 3% paid on €25 billion in 2014 by the State to the Central Bank of Ireland, which is circa €750 million, and €500 million paid from the Central Bank of Ireland to the State on account of the Central Bank of Ireland paying 1% for the €25 billion to the ECB, or €250 million; the resulting annual change in financing costs, compared to the promissory note structure; the result NPV of the restructuring; any conditions with regard to the bonds being held by the Central Bank of Ireland, for example, maximum length of time; all other financial information associated with the bonds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7994/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Eight new Floating Rate Treasury Bonds have been issued to discharge the Promissory Notes liability consisting of:

- a 25 year bond of €2bn maturing in 2038 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.50%;
- a 28 year bond of €2bn maturing in 2041 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.53%;
- a 30 year bond of €2bn maturing in 2043 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.57%;
- a 32 year bond of €3bn maturing in 2045 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.60%;
- a 34 year bond of €3bn maturing in 2047 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus a margin of 2.62%;
- a 36 year bond of €3bn maturing in 2049 with an interest rate of 6-month Euribor plus

a margin of 2.65%;

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

- a 40 year bond of €5bn 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/>

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

The Deputy has requested the projected annual capital and interest schedules for the portfolio of bonds. With regard to the capital element the €25bn par value will be repaid in line with the schedule given above. With regard to the interest projections, 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>

With regard to the projected annual cash return to the State from the Central Bank of Ireland this is also impossible to forecast accurately due to the associated cost of funding that the Central Bank of Ireland must pay to the ECB, the floating rate interest that it receives on the bonds that it holds and any mark-to-market implications for valuing the bonds. Again, estimates were produced in the explanatory information that was released by the Department of Finance in relation to the transaction last week. This assumed zero mark-to-market implications for the bond as it was not possible to estimate if the bonds would trade upwards or downwards post issuance.

Under the old financing structure IBRC would have held the Promissory Notes for a weighted average of 7-8 years, whereas under the new structure the Central Bank of Ireland will hold the bonds for a weighted average of 4c.14.3 years.

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 which 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.

The Central Bank of Ireland will sell the bonds but only where such a sale is not disruptive

to financial stability. They have however undertaken that minimum of bonds will be sold in accordance with the following schedule: to end 2014 (€0.5bn), 2015-2018 (€0.5bn p.a.), 2019-2023 (€1bn p.a.), 2024 and after (€2bn p.a.).

Tax Reliefs Availability

157. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding mortgage interest supplement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7996/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Tax relief is available, at varying rates and subject to certain ceilings, in respect of interest paid by an individual on a loan used for the purchase, repair, development or improvement of his/her sole or main residence or the sole or main residence of his/her former or separated spouse/civil partner. The relief is available up to and including the tax year 2017 on the interest paid on qualifying home loans taken out between 1 January 2004 and before 1 January 2013.

Individuals purchasing their first qualifying residence are eligible for the higher ceiling, known as the ‘first time buyer’ ceiling, for the first seven tax years of entitlement to mortgage interest relief. The maximum amount of interest paid in respect the ‘first time buyer’ ceiling for which tax relief may be claimed is €20,000 for married/widowed persons and €10,000 for single persons.

For tax year eight and subsequent tax years, the ceiling on relief, known as the ‘non-first time buyer’ ceiling is €6,000 for married/widowed persons and €3,000 for single persons. It is the first time buyer ceiling that ceases after seven years and not the tax relief itself. The tax relief continues to apply in tax year 8 and subsequent years up to and including tax year 2017 at the ‘non first time buyer’ ceiling.

IBRC Liquidation

158. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the implications, if any, for the operation of the National Asset Management Agency SPV arising from the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation liquidation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8046/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy may be aware, between now and August of this year, the Special Liquidator will seek to value and sell certain IBRC loans. After this sales process has been completed, NAMA will acquire the residual unsold loans in the IBRC loan portfolio at a price which is to be determined by the Special Liquidator. However NAMA’s primary commercial objective, as set out in Section 10(2) of the Act, is to obtain the best achievable financial return for the State having regard to the cost of acquiring and dealing with bank assets and its own cost of capital and other costs.

I have no reason to doubt the Agency’s view that it will achieve its targets over its lifetime.

Question No. 159 answered with Question No. 154.

Capitation Grants

160. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide

an analysis of the per capita spend by his Department on a regional basis with regard to current and capital spends in the area of education . [7882/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The expenditure information requested by the Deputy is not available on a regional basis. However, based on the estimated number of full-time students at First, Second and Third Levels in the 2011/12 academic year, and the 2012 provisional outturn of expenditure for my Vote, an estimate of the spend per capita is contained in the following table.

Estimated expenditure per full-time student based on Gross Voted Expenditure

Sector	Estimated No. of Full-Time Students 2011/12 academic year	-	-	2012 Provisional Outturn Gross Voted Expenditure	-	-	Estimated Per Capita Cost
-	-	-	-	€-million	-	-	
-	-	Current	Capital	Total	Current	Capital	Total
Primary		-	-	-	-	-	
Second-Level		-	-	-	-	-	
Third level		-	-	-	-	-	
Total						€408	

Education Schemes

161. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of persons in Westmeath who have so far applied for and are taking part in Springboard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7969/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Springboard is a specific initiative that strategically targets funding of free part time higher education courses for unemployed people in areas where there are identified labour market skills shortages or employment opportunities. The courses are delivered in public, private and not for profit higher education providers around the country. In addition, many Springboard courses are delivered on line, enabling people to access them regardless of where they reside in the country. A total of 261 people with an address in County Westmeath have applied for a place under the two rounds of the Springboard programme that have issued to date and 138 people with an address in County Westmeath enrolled on Springboard 2011 and Springboard 2012 courses.

Student Grant Scheme Delays

162. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a student grant application will be dealt with in full in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7770/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that the student referred to by the Deputy has had her application reviewed and she was subsequently awarded the non-adjacent rate. A revised award letter issued on 8th February 2013.

Student Grant Scheme Delays

163. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive a decision on the outcome of their application to Student Universal Support Ireland for an education grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7774/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that the student referred to by the Deputy has been awarded a grant and an award letter issued on 12th February, 2013.

State Examinations Issues

164. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will investigate the requirement of the State Examinations Commission that superintendents of examinations must be registered with the Teaching Council; his views on the necessity of a retired teacher (details supplied) in County Longford who wishes to superintend at exams, to register with the Teaching Council. [7779/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

Retired teachers may apply for the position of superintendent and be appointed in accordance with the terms of the Employment Equality Act, 1998, which prohibits discrimination in employment on a number of grounds, including age. For the 2012 examinations the SEC appointed a total of 4786 superintendents of whom 1311 were retired teachers. To be eligible for appointment applicants must satisfy all of the terms and conditions for appointment set out by the SEC. For the 2013 examinations, this also includes a requirement to be registered on the Register of Teachers maintained by the Teaching Council of Ireland.

The requirement to be a registered teacher with the Teaching Council arises from the recent passing of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 which was signed into law on the 26th December 2012. The Act obliges employers to only employ people who have been vetted by the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána to work with children and young people. Under the terms of Part 3, Section 12.4 of the Act, this obligation is regarded as being satisfied in the case of the State certificate examinations if the person so employed is a registered teacher. In order for SEC to be in a position to complete the appointment and assignment of superintendents nationwide in advance of the commencement of the written examinations in June the SEC requires that it receive confirmation of registration with the Teaching Council by the end of March 2013.

Applicants for superintending at the 2013 examinations could apply without being registered and have until the 31st March 2013 to complete the registration process. Applicants not on the Register of Teachers as at 31st March 2013 will not be deemed suitable for appointment as superintendent at the 2013 examinations.

The requirement to register has been introduced so that the SEC, as an employer of persons working with children and young people at the certificate examinations, can comply with its legislative obligations.

Student Grant Scheme Delays

165. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive a decision on their application to Student Universal Support Ireland for an education grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7783/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that the student referred to by the Deputy has been awarded a grant and an award letter issued on 7th February, 2013.

Schools Building Projects Status

166. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will confirm plans for a new school building (details supplied) in Dublin 24; if he will detail schedules being followed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7787/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy is aware, I announced in June 2011 that forty new schools comprising of twenty new primary schools and twenty new post-primary schools, were to be established up to 2017 across a number of locations. The Department subsequently invited patron bodies to make applications for patronage of the new primary schools to be established in 2012 and 2013. Following the assessment process of the applications concerned, approval was conveyed in March 2012 last for the establishment in September 2013 next of two primary schools in the area referred to by the Deputy. My Department is working closely with the Local Authority to acquire a suitable site for the construction of permanent accommodation for both schools. A major building project for the provision of this accommodation was included in the five year construction programme announced in March 2012, and is scheduled to proceed to construction in 2014/2015. The current status of all projects on the school building programme may be viewed on my Department's website at www.education.ie and this is updated regularly throughout the year.

Education Schemes

167. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the counselling and addiction studies course at ICHAS Limerick is not recognised for social protection entitlement purposes in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7797/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The entitlement to social welfare allowances is a matter for the Department of Social Protection.

Back to Education Allowance Eligibility

168. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the system of grant-back to education and free fee entitlement for mature students (details supplied) who want to retrain in lower or equal level disciplines different to their original qualification in an effort to improve their chances of employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7798/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Eligibility for the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) and associated payments is determined and administered by the Department of Social Protection. Any changes to the qualifying criteria for the Back to Education Allowance Scheme are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Social Protection.

In general, under the student grant scheme students who previously pursued a course of study are not eligible for grant assistance for a second period of study at the same level, irrespective of whether or not a grant was paid previously. Subject to the conditions of the student grant scheme, grants are available where students are progressing to a course at a higher level. The objective of this policy is to assist as many students as possible in obtaining one qualification at each level of study. Similarly under the free fees scheme, free fees are not payable for a second period of study at the same level. There are no plans at present to change the arrangements currently in place for these schemes.

However, as part of the joint Government-Industry ICT Action Plan, earlier this month I launched more than 750 free places on level 8 ICT graduate skills conversion courses, targeted at graduate jobseekers who want to reskill for the expanding employment opportunities in the ICT area. Further information on the courses, which are available in higher education institutions are around the country, is available at www.ictskills.ie.

In addition, the Springboard programme targets funding of free part time higher education courses for unemployed people in areas where there are identified labour market skills shortages, such as ICT, Medical Devices and Pharmachem. Springboard places are open to unemployed people who have a previous history of employment and there is no requirement that a person be progressing on the National Framework of Qualifications. More than 10,000 places have been provided under the two rounds of the programme to date. An expansion of the Springboard initiative was announced in Budget 2013 and it is expected that a new call for proposals for courses to be run under the programme will issue in the coming weeks. Further information is available at the dedicated information and applications website: www.springboardcourses.ie.

Education and Training Provision

169. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide a list of all local training initiatives in tabular form broken down by local authority area; the location of the initiatives; the number of staff; and the number of training places. [7810/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The information the Deputy sought is not readily available. I have asked FÁS to collate this data as soon as possible. When received I will forward directly to the Deputy. I am informed by FÁS that it will not be possible to break down this data by Local Authority.

Traffic Management

170. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the discussions he has had with Meath County Council in relation to the preparation of a traffic management plan for September 2013 in respect of a school (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7821/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Consultants engaged by my Department are in ongoing discussions with Meath County Council in relation to the agreement of a traffic management plan for the school referred to by the Deputy. Measures have been taken by the school to manage the traffic associated with the school, such as staggering opening and closing times with neighbouring schools. Additionally, it is intended to conduct a detailed traffic count, to inform traffic management solutions for the area.

Student Grant Scheme Appeals

171. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on a Student Universal Support Ireland grant appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7842/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand that the grant application from the student in question was unsuccessful and that he appealed this decision to the grant awarding authority's appeals officer who upheld the original decision. The student subsequently submitted an appeal to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board. The appeal was considered at a sitting of the Appeals Board on the 27th November 2012. A letter notifying the student of the outcome of his appeal issued on the 28th November 2012.

Student Grant Scheme Appeals

172. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on a Student Universal Support Ireland grant appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7843/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy, his student grant application was appealed to the appeals officer in SUSI.

On that basis, the application is currently being reassessed and the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Apprenticeship Programmes

173. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7862/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): This is a day to day operation matter for FÁS who have responsibility for the Redundant Apprentice Placement Scheme (RAPS).

FÁS have informed me that it is a requirement of this scheme that an Employer must provide a Tax Clearance Certificate to qualify to train redundant apprentices.

It is not possible for FÁS to allow this employer to employ the individual in question until the Tax Clearance Certificate is provided.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

174. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the delay in informing a person (details supplied) in County Cork of the refusal of their grant when the reason given was said to be that they applied for a course which was not an approved course; the reasons the course is not approved; the reason the relevant college is not treated as other third level colleges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7864/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand that the course undertaken by the student is the BA Media Production Management in Ballyfermot College of Further Education and is an approved post leaving certificate course under the terms and conditions of the student grant scheme. However, not all students attending this course would be deemed eligible for funding when previous academic attainment is taken into account as they may not be deemed to be progressing under the scheme. Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that a letter will be sent to the student referred to by further Deputy to provide further clarification on the reason why she was refused a grant.

School Curriculum

175. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide an update on the planned junior certificate reforms including the next steps and the timescale for the reforms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7869/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The new curriculum specifications for subjects in the Junior Cycle will be introduced on a phased basis. The specification for each subject will be available in schools a year prior to its implementation with first year students.

Phase 1: English will be introduced to first years in the school year 2014-15 for first certification in autumn 2017. A number of short courses prepared by the NCCA will also be available. Phase 2: Irish, Science and Business Studies will be introduced to first years in school year 2015-16 for first certification in autumn 2018. Phase 3: Home Economics, Music, Geography, Modern Languages and Art, Craft and Design will be introduced to first years in school year 2016-17 for first certification in autumn 2019. Phase 4: Mathematics, Religious Education, Jewish Studies, Classics, History and Technology subjects will be introduced to first years in school year 2017-18 for first certification in autumn 2020. A series of information meetings will be held around the country in February and March for Principals and Deputy Principals. These are not part of the formal CPD.

However, a comprehensive professional development service will be provided from Autumn 2013 for teachers of each subject and also for Principals and Deputy Principals.

Schools Building Projects Application Numbers

4	Cork	16746S	Ballygarvan NS.	Primary	New School
5	Cork	17667E	S N Pádraig Naofa, Whitechurch.	Primary	Extension
6	Cork	18279A	St Mary's NS, Waterpark, Carrigaline.	Primary	Extension
7	Cork	19839R	Gael Scoil Uí Riordáin, Ballincollig.	Primary	New School
8	Donegal	17268N	Sn An Br M O Cleirigh, Creevy, Ballyshannon.	Primary	Extension
9	Dublin	18324C	Scoil Bríde C., Palmerstown	Primary	Extension
10	Dublin	17936F	Eoin Baisde B Snr., Clontarf. (Linked to 19006Q)	Primary	Extension
11	Dublin	19006Q	Eoin Baisde B Sois, Clontarf. (Linked to 17936F)	Primary	Extension
12	Dublin	19373U	St Michael's Hse Special School, Greendale	Primary	Extension
13	Dublin	60450U	Colaiste Mhuire Na mBráithre, Cabra.	Post Primary	New School
14	Dublin	00697S	St Brigid's Mxd NS, Castleknock, Dublin Fingal.	Primary	Extension
15	Dublin	20223I	Gaelscoil Eiscir Ríada, Lucan.	Primary	New School

Questions - Written Answers

16	Dublin	16675V	Mulhuddart NS, Dublin Fingal.	Primary	New School
17	Dublin	20269J	Scoil Chormaic, Balbriggan, Dublin Fingal.	Primary	New School
18	Dublin	20302E	Thornleigh ETNS, Swords, Dublin Fingal.	Primary	New School
19	Dublin	20348F	Holywell ETNS, Swords, Dublin Fingal.	Primary	New School
20	Dublin	60010P	Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan, Dublin Fingal.	Post Primary	Extension
21	Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	19374W	Garrahan Mhuire, Goatstown.	Primary	Extension
22	Galway	08512U	Iomair NS, Killimor.	Primary	New School
23	Kerry	17646T	S N Uaimh Bhreanainn, Tralee.	Primary	New School
24	Kerry	20197K	Kenmare NS.	Primary	New School
25	Kerry	61440W	St. Mary's CBS, Tralee.	Post Primary	Extension
26	Kildare	20058T	Scoil Úi Fhiaich, Maynooth.	Primary	New School
27	Kildare	20114D	Scoil Bríd, Naas.	Primary	Extension
28	Kildare	61710C	Meanscoil Iognáid Ris, Naas.	Post Primary	Extension

29	Laois	07442U	Borris In Ossory Convent NS.	Primary	New School
30	Laois	15556I	Portarlinton Convent NS.	Primary	Extension
31	Laois	17617M	Scoil Chomhgain Naofa, Killeshin.	Primary	New School
32	Laois	20071L	Scoil Bhride, Rathdowney.	Primary	Extension
33	Limerick	13026P	Kilfinane NS.	Primary	New School
34	Limerick	18991S	J F K Memorial School, Limerick City.	Primary	New School
35	Louth	20205G	St Mary's Parish School, Drogheda.	Primary	New School
36	Louth	20349H	Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa, Dundalk.	Primary	New School
37	Louth	63870L	Drogheda Grammar School.	Post Primary	Extension
38	Mayo	20142I	Scoil Íosa, Ballyhaunis.	Primary	Extension
39	Meath	17213L	S N Mhuire, Moynalty.	Primary	New School
40	Meath	17821L	Scoil Nais Mhuire Naofa, Enfield.	Primary	New School
41	Meath	76103M	Laytown Community College.	Post Primary	New School
42	Offaly	17637S	S N Sheosaimh Naofa, Ballinagar.	Primary	New School

Questions - Written Answers

43	Offaly	18267Q	Croin-choill N S, Birr.	Primary	Extension
44	Offaly	65610S	Coláiste Choilm, Tullamore.	Post Primary	New School
45	Roscommon	65100S	Scoil Mhuire, Strokestown.	Post Primary	Extension
46	Sligo	65170Q	Summerhill College, Sligo.	Post Primary	New School
47	Tipperary N.R.	15696B	Silvermines NS.	Primary	New School
48	Tipperary N.R.	65470F	Ursuline Convent Thurles.	Post Primary	Extension
49	Tipperary N.R.	72440K	Nenagh Vocational School.	Post Primary	Extension
50	Waterford	64970U	Coláiste Na Maighdine, Waterford City.	Post Primary	New School
51	Wexford	17017L	S N Phadraig, Crossabeg.	Primary	Extension
52	Wicklow	09760V	Powercourt NS.	Primary	New School
53	Wicklow	61800D	Presentation College, Bray.	Post Primary	New School

Projects completed in 2011

Area	Roll Number	School Name & Address	Brief	Sector
Carlow	18363M	SN Muire gan Smal, Green Lane	Extension/Refurbishment	Primary
Cavan	06998Q	SN Tulach a Mhile, Corlough	New School	Primary
Cork	20105C	Star of the Sea Primary School, Passage West	New School	Primary
Donegal	18219F	SN Chonaill, Machaire Chlochair, Bun Beag	Extension/Refurbishment	Primary

Donegal	71240U	Stranor-lar Vocational School (FinnValley College)	New School	Post-Primary
Donegal	91409A	Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair, Derrybeg,	Extension/ Refurbishment	Post-primary
Dublin City	16964F	Scoil Mhuire Ogh 1, Loreto College, Crumlin Rd, Dublin 12	Extension/ Refurbishment	Primary
Dublin Fingal	15315J	St. George's NS, Naul	Extension/ Refurbishment	Primary
Dublin Fingal	19898K	Gaelscoil an Duinnigh, Feltrim, Swords	New School	Primary
Dublin Fingal	20095C	Gaelscoil Bhrian Bórimhe (see also 20145O)	New School	Primary
Dublin Fingal	20145O	Swords Educate Together NS (see also 20095C)	New School	Primary
Dublin Fingal	20161M	Donabate\ Portrane Educate Together	New School	Primary
Dublin Fingal	20201V	Tyrrelstown Educate Together	New School	Primary
Dublin Fingal	20252P	GS Bhaile Brigín, Castlelands, Balbriggan (See also 20282B)	Extension/ Refurbishment	Primary
Dublin Fingal	20282B	Bracken Educate Together, Castlelands, Balbriggan (See also 20252P)	Extension/ Refurbishment	Primary
Dublin Fingal	76098W	Pobail Scoil Setanta, Phibblestown	New School	Post-primary
Dublin Fingal	76104O	Donabate Community College	New School	Post-primary

Questions - Written Answers

Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown	60860Q	Our Lady's School, Templeogue Road, Terenure, Dublin 6W	Extension/ Refurbishment	Post-primary
Galway	19506N	Cappataggle Central School, Ballinasloe	Extension/ Refurbishment	Primary
Galway City	19858V	Gaelscoil Dara, Galway City	New School	Primary
Kerry	20196I	Ballybunion NS	New School	Primary
Kildare	06209J	Athy Model NS (See also 16705E and 20192A)	Extension/ Refurbishment	Primary
Kildare	11976K	Scoil Choca Naofa, Kilcock, Co. Kildare	Extension/ Refurbishment	Primary
Kildare	16705E	Scoil Phadraig Naofa, Athy (See also 06209J and 20192A)	New School	Primary
Kildare	17662R	Scoil Bhride NS, Kill	New School	Primary
Kildare	18654A	Caragh NS, Naas	Extension/ Refurbishment	Primary
Kildare	20192A	Scoil Áth Í, Athy (See also 06209J and 16705E)	Extension/ Refurbishment	Primary
Kildare	20271T	Scoil na Naomh Uilig, Rickardstown, Newbridge (Phase II)	Extension/ Refurbishment	Primary
Kilkenny	15160G	Marymount N.S., The Rower, Inistioge	Extension/ Refurbishment	Primary
Laois	14260F	Abbeyleix Sth NS, Abbeyleix	New School	Primary
Limerick City	19587Q	St. Augustine's Youth Encounter Project	Extension/ Refurbishment	Primary

Longford	71690F	Ballymahon Vocational School	Extension/Refurbishment	Post-primary
Louth	18069M	Naomh Seosamh, Mell, Drogheda	New School	Primary
Louth	19598V	Muire na nGael NS, Bay Estate, Dundalk	Extension/Refurbishment	Primary
Louth	20294I	Aston Village Educate Together, Drogheda	Extension/Refurbishment	Primary
Mayo	20046M	Gaelscoil Na Cruaiche, Cathair na Mart, Co. Mayo	New School	Primary
Meath	19253K	Scoil Naomh Barra, Wilkinstown	Extension/Refurbishment	Primary
Meath	20180Q	Scoil Eoin National School, Navan	New School	Primary
Meath	20215J	St. Paul's NS, Ratoath	New School	Primary
Monaghan	18028V	Corr a Chrainn NS, Corr a Chrainn	Extension/Refurbishment	Primary
Offaly	17523D	SN Cronain Naofa, Dromakeenan	Extension/Refurbishment	Primary
South Dublin	20274C	Esker ET, Adamstown, Lucan	Extension/Refurbishment	Primary
South Dublin	20303G	Lucan East Educate Together, Clonburris	Extension/Refurbishment	Primary
Waterford	19629G	Holy Cross School, Ballycarnane, Tramore	New School	Primary
Waterford	20076V	Bunscoil Bhothar na Naomh, Lisimore	Extension/Refurbishment	Primary
Westmeath	18812P	Loch an Ghair NS Mullingar	New School	Primary

Wexford	71630K	Vocational College, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Extension/ Refurbishment	Post-primary
Wexford	76127D	Gorey Community College	New School	Post-primary
Wicklow	20016D	Gaelscoil Uí Cheadaigh, Bray	Extension\ refurbishment	Primary
Cork	20001N	Gaelscoil Bheanntaí	New School	Primary
Cork	76090G	Bantry Community College	New School	Post-primary
Kildare	91530S	Kildare Community School	New School	Post-primary
Limerick	76093M	Abbeyfeale Community College	New School	Post-primary
Meath	91517D	Athboy Community College	New School	Post-primary
Wicklow	76099B	Wicklow Town Community College	New School	Post-primary

School Staffing

177. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will list in tabular form the schools in County Meath; the number of pupils and teachers; the pupil-teacher ratio therein for the years 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7931/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): A list of schools in County Meath with enrolments for 2011\2012 academic year can be found in the table. 2012\2013 academic year data are not yet available.

With regard to teachers, in 2011\2012 there were a total of 1254 teachers in primary schools in Meath, including 907 mainstream class teachers. Data on the numbers of teachers in post primary schools are not available broken down by county.

Pupil teacher ratio is not available broken down by county. Average Class Size at primary level for County Meath for the last three years for which data are available are as follows: 2009\2010: 26.2; 2010\2011: 26.0; and 2011\2012: 26.2.

Table

Roll No.	County Name	Year	Count - Teachers	Official School Name	MS Enrolment
00883P	Meath	2011	32	AINE NAOFA N S	334

00885T	Meath	2011	44	RA- TOATH JUNIOR N S	442
01309L	Meath	2011	23	STACK- ALLEN N S	210
01421F	Meath	2011	9	KILS- KYRE MIXED N S	89
02905J	Meath	2011	15	S N NAOMH PADRAIG	165
03275H	Meath	2011	10	NEW- TOWN N S	96
04210H	Meath	2011	15	KILMES- SAN MXD N S	157
05062A	Meath	2011	9	KELLS PAROCHI- AL N S	65
05630L	Meath	2011	51	SCOIL MHICHIL NA BUA- CHAILLI	296
07120V	Meath	2011	7	KILLY- ON N S	85
09238I	Meath	2011	10	BALLIN- LOUGH N S	89
10801Q	Meath	2011	10	DRUM- BARRAGH N S	89
11039O	Meath	2011	10	KILBEG N S	93
11978O	Meath	2011	10	SCOIL MHUIRE NS	88
12068D	Meath	2011	38	OUR LADY OF MERCY NS	446
12488C	Meath	2011	27	OLD- CASTLE MXD N S	286
12788O	Meath	2011	7	FLOW- ERFIELD N S	65
12897T	Meath	2011	6	UGHTY- NEILL N S	24
13775K	Meath	2011	5	ST PAT- RICKS N S	43

Questions - Written Answers

14348T	Meath	2011	4	CAR- RICKLECK N S	30
15104T	Meath	2011	37	BRIDE NAOFA N S	360
15483H	Meath	2011	5	ST LOUIS N S	45
16067V	Meath	2011	9	SCOIL NAIS FININ NAOFA	64
16100Q	Meath	2011	50	MERCY CONVENT N S	479
16143L	Meath	2011	11	S N PHEAD- AIR AGUS PHOIL	125
16549Q	Meath	2011	8	KNOCK- COMMON N S	75
16646O	Meath	2011	54	ST MARYS CONVENT N S	557
16655P	Meath	2011	23	ST. NICHOLAS PRIMARY SCHOOL	270
16722E	Meath	2011	28	SCOIL CHOLM- CILLE	270
16774A	Meath	2011	9	SCOIL NAIS AN OBAIR	103
16790V	Meath	2011	8	S N NAOMH SEOSAMH	58
16825O	Meath	2011	32		272
16991I	Meath	2011	16	CARN- AROSS N S	151
17029S	Meath	2011	7	S N NAOMH CIANAIN	72
17088L	Meath	2011	20	Scoil Uí Ghrámhnaigh	203
17123K	Meath	2011	9	KIL- MAINHAM WOOD N S	94

17162U	Meath	2011	11	S N BH-RIGHDE	83
17175G	Meath	2011	20	BOHER-MEEN N S	206
17203I	Meath	2011	10	S N ULTAIN NAOFA	92
17213L	Meath	2011	11	S N MHUIRE	99
17220I	Meath	2011	8	S N BH-RIGHDE	81
17312N	Meath	2011	13	S N CUL AN MHUILLINN	84
17480L	Meath	2011	23	S N BAILE CHEANT	233
17494W	Meath	2011	9	S N AN RATH MHOR	95
17513A	Meath	2011	11	S N CILL BHRIGHDE	97
17520U	Meath	2011	22	S N MHUIRE	196
17521W	Meath	2011	20	S N COLM-CILLE	203
17560J	Meath	2011	14	S N SEOSAMH NAOMTHA	131
17623H	Meath	2011	35		335
17629T	Meath	2011	10	S N PADRAIG NAOFA	88
17652O	Meath	2011	24	SCOIL OILIBHEIR NAOFA	214
17705J	Meath	2011	38	S N CROS BAN	410
17741N	Meath	2011	21	SCOIL NAIS AITINN BHUI	208
17742P	Meath	2011	11	SCOIL NAIS MHUIRE NAOFA	99

Questions - Written Answers

17821L	Meath	2011	36	SCOIL NAIS MHUIRE NAOFA	414
17839H	Meath	2011	32	S N BHEINN NAOFA B	301
17840P	Meath	2011	25	S N BHEININ NAOFA C	279
17856H	Meath	2011	18	S N DUN UABHAIR	194
17857J	Meath	2011	10	S N AINDREIS NAOFA	103
17930Q	Meath	2011	53	S N SEACH- NAILL NAOFA	501
17946I	Meath	2011	5	SCOIL NAIS NAOMH AINE	25
17947K	Meath	2011	18	SCOIL NAOMH BRIDE	180
17964K	Meath	2011	12	S N MHUIRE NAOFA	132
17969U	Meath	2011	44	S N MHUIRE	283
17986U	Meath	2011	14	S N NMH	124
18016O	Meath	2011	29	S N CO- LUMBAIN	313
18037W	Meath	2011	4	S N MHUIRE	38
18040L	Meath	2011	24	S N NAOMH PADRAIG	273
18044T	Meath	2011	48	S N NAOMH PADRAIG	534
18051Q	Meath	2011	12	COOLE N.S,	108
18106P	Meath	2011	21	S N NA TRIONOIDE NAOFA	230

18132Q	Meath	2011	14	S N MUIRE	136
18169Q	Meath	2011	10	S N RATH RI- AGAIN	101
18174J	Meath	2011	13	S N CAITRIONA NAOFA	130
18195R	Meath	2011	8	ST FIN- IAN N S	67
18344I	Meath	2011	13	S N MHUIRE	112
18358T	Meath	2011	11	S N FIACH	83
18413B	Meath	2011	10	S N NAOMH TREASA	90
18429Q	Meath	2011	6	S N MHUIRE	41
18448U	Meath	2011	19	S N RATH BE- AGAIN	195
18453N	Meath	2011	12	S N MHICHIL NAOFA	112
18500T	Meath	2011	10	S N NAOMH COLM- CILLE	99
18762D	Meath	2011	33	S N REALT NA MARA (B)	326
18767N	Meath	2011	37	S N REALT NA MARA (C)	399
18887A	Meath	2011	8	SCOIL NAIS MAOL HOSAE	62
19018A	Meath	2011	16	DAN- GAN MIXED N S	165
19216E	Meath	2011		ST UL- TANS SPE- CIAL SCH	109
19253K	Meath	2011	16	Scoil Naomh Barra	158
19292U	Meath	2011	11	CAS- TLETOWN N S	112

Questions - Written Answers

19300Q	Meath	2011	16	CAS- TLEJOR- DAN CEN- TRAL NS	146
19476H	Meath	2011	53	ST OLI- VER PLUN- KETT NS	497
19486K	Meath	2011	49	SCOIL NAIS DEA- GLAIN	549
19560T	Meath	2011		ST MARYS SPECIAL SCHOOL	71
19671F	Meath	2011	59	ST PAULS N S	664
19725C	Meath	2011	25	GAELS- COIL EAN- NA	244
19768U	Meath	2011	40	SCOIL MHUIRE	496
19779C	Meath	2011	20	GAEL- SCOIL NA CILLE	245
19813W	Meath	2011	23	KIL- DALKEY CENTRAL N S	241
19867W	Meath	2011	20	SCOIL NA RITHE	199
20017F	Meath	2011	33	SCOIL AN SPIO- RAID NAO- IMH	326
20032B	Meath	2011	58	DUN- BOYNE JUNIOR N S	543
20033D	Meath	2011	49	DUN- BOYNE SENIOR N S	557
20051F	Meath	2011	18	GAEL- SCOIL NA BOINNE	220
20082Q	Meath	2011	18	GAELS- COIL DHUN BUINNE	213

20164S	Meath	2011	18	NAVAN EDUCATE TOGETHER NS	133
20179I	Meath	2011	50	ST STE- PHENS NS	548
20180Q	Meath	2011	40	SCOIL NAOMH EOIN	370
20191V	Meath	2011	16	ST PETERS NATIONAL SCHOOL	111
20200T	Meath	2011	55	RA- TOATH SENIOR NS	571
20215J	Meath	2011	47	ST PAULS NS	524
20216L	Meath	2011	41	SCOIL OILIBHEIR NAOFA	368
20258E	Meath	2011	23	Gaelscoil an Bhradáin Feasa	265
20352T	Meath	2011	4	ARD Rí COM- MUNITY NATIONAL SCHOOL	26
20379Q	Meath	2011		Stepping Stones Spe- cial School	30
20382F	Meath	2011	4	Gaelscoil na Mí	36

Table

Academic Year	Roll Number	Official School Name	Local Au- thority	Enrolments
2011	64350N	St Patrick's Classical School	Meath Coun- ty Council	879
2011	64360Q	St. Joseph's Secondary School, Navan,	Meath Coun- ty Council	596
2011	64370T	Loreto Sec- ondary School	Meath Coun- ty Council	774
2011	64410F	Eureka Sec- ondary School	Meath Coun- ty Council	738
2011	64420I	Franciscan College	Meath Coun- ty Council	311

Questions - Written Answers

2011	64450R	Scoil Mhuire	Meath County Council	593
2011	71950F	St Peter's College	Meath County Council	1389
2011	71960I	Community College Dunshaughlin	Meath County Council	907
2011	71970L	St. Fintinas Post Primary School	Meath County Council	208
2011	71980O	O'Carolan College	Meath County Council	541
2011	71990R	St Oliver Post Primary	Meath County Council	514
2011	71991T	Coláiste Pobail Rath Cairn	Meath County Council	129
2011	72010I	Beaufort College	Meath County Council	552
2011	76088T	Ratoath College	Meath County Council	846
2011	76103M	Colaiste na hInse	Meath County Council	444
2011	91456J	St Ciaran's Community School	Meath County Council	656
2011	91495T	Ashbourne Community School	Meath County Council	1007
2011	91508C	Boyne Community School	Meath County Council	718
2011	91517D	ATHBOY COMMUNITY SCHOOL	Meath County Council	508

Written Answers Nos. 178-195

Schools Building Projects Status

178. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools built in County Meath since 2005; the date on which they were built and the locations of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7934/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): A total of twelve new schools were constructed in County Meath during the period 2005 to 2012. The following is the list of the new schools constructed during the period in question: 2005 Roll No 00885T - Ratoath Mixed National School, Ratoath; 2007 Roll No 76088T - Ratoath College, Ratoath; 2008 Roll No 18044T - SN Naomh Pdraig, Stamullen; 2009 Roll No 16655P - St Nicholas Primary School, Longwood; 2009 Roll No 18016O - SN Columbain, Ballivor; 2010 Roll No 20216L -

Scoil Oilibheir Naofa, Bettystown; 2011 Roll No 20180Q - Scoil Naomh Eoin, Clonmagadden Valley, Windtown, Navan; 2011 Roll No 20215J - St Paul's National School, Ratoath; 2011 Roll No 91517D - Athboy Community School, Athboy; 2012 Roll No 17213L - Scoil Naomh Mhuire, Ma Nealta, Ceannanus Mór; 2012 Roll No 17821L - Scoil Nais Mhuire Naofa, Enfield; 2012 Roll No 76103M - Coláiste Na hInse, Bettystown.

School Accommodation

179. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the schools renting prefabs in County Meath; the date on which this commenced and the cost incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7935/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Details of rented prefabs in use in Primary and Post Primary schools in Co Meath, together with rental commencement dates and annual rental cost, is outlined in the following table. Please note that one prefab unit may consist of one or more classrooms and/or ancillary accommodation.

Primary and Post Primary Schools renting prefabs in County Meath - Feb 2013

Roll no	School name	Town	County	Annual rental cost	Date of rental commencement
00883P	St Annes	Navan	Meath	€5,278.59	01/03/04
01309L	St Patricks NS	Navan	Meath		01/09/00
02905J	SN Naomh Padraig	Baconstown	Meath		01/09/08
04210H	St Josephs NS (Kilmessan Mxd NS)	Kilmessan	Meath	€6,921.20	01/09/07
05630L	St Michaels NS Trim	Trim	Meath		01/09/07
11039O	Kilbeg NS	Carlonsdown, Kells	Meath	€5,278.59	01/09/00
15104T	Scoil Bhride	Navan	Meath		01/02/00
16100Q	St Josephs Mercy P.S	Navan	Meath		01/09/07
-	-	-	-		01/07/06
17520U	Robinstown NS	Navan	Meath		30/08/07
-	-	-	-		01/09/06
17623H		Athboy	Meath		01/09/07
-	-	-	-		01/09/06
-	-	-	-		01/09/05

Questions - Written Answers

17705J	White-cross Primary School	Julianstown	Meath		01/09/11
-	-	-	-		01/09/08
-	-	-	-		01/09/07
-	-	-	-		01/09/06
-	-	-	-		01/09/05
17839H	Duleek BNS	Duleek	Meath		01/09/07
-	-	-	-		01/09/06
17840P	Scoil Bhainin Naofa/Duleek GNS	Duleek	Meath		01/09/07
18106P	Lismullen NS	Navan	Meath		01/12/06
-	-	-	-		01/09/06
18448U	Rathbeggan NS	Dunshaughlin	Meath		01/09/07
18762D	Realt na Mara BNS	Donacorney	Meath		01/09/05
-	-	-	-		01/11/99
18767N	Realt na Mara GNS	Mornington	Meath		19/06/11
-	-	-	-		01/09/08
-	-	-	-		01/09/07
19560T	Saint Marys Special School	Navan	Meath		27/08/07
-	-	-	-		01/05/06
19768U	St Marys NS	Asbourne	Meath		01/09/06
20032B	Dunboyne Junior School	Dunboyne	Meath		01/09/06
20033D	Dunboyne Senior Primary School	Dunboyne	Meath		01/09/07
-	-	-	-	€8,954.40	20/03/07
-	-	-	-		01/09/06
20082Q	Gaelscoil Thulach na nOg	DunBuinne	Meath		01/09/08
20164S	Navan Educate Together NS	Navan	Meath		01/09/08

20179I	St. Stephen's National School	Navan	Meath		01/08/12
20191V	St Peters National School, Church Of Ireland	Dunboyne	Meath		01/09/08
-	-	-	-		01/09/07
-	-	-	-		01/09/06
-	-	-	-		01/09/05
-	-	-	-		01/09/04
20200T	Ratoath Senior NS	Ratoath	Meath		01/09/07
20352T	Ard Ri Community NS	Navan	Meath		01/09/12
20396Q	Ashbourne Educate Together NS	Ashbourne	Meath		01/09/12
91508C	Boyne Community School	Trim	Meath		07/01/08

Schools Building Projects Status

180. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the following school building projects (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7940/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that the 5 Year Construction Programme that I announced on 9 March 2012, together with my recent announcement of the 50 school projects which are scheduled for construction in 2013 as part of a €2 billion capital investment programme, outlines the major school projects that will commence construction over the duration of the Plan. The primary aim at the core of the Five Year Plan is focussed on meeting demographic demands to ensure that every child will have access to a physical school place and that our school system is in a position to cope with increasing pupil numbers.

Details of the projects included in the Five Year Plan, including those projects referred to by the Deputy, may be viewed on my Department's website www.education.ie. These details continue to be maintained and updated regularly on the website. The following reflects the current position of the specific school building projects to which the Deputy refers:

SN Mhuire, Ma Nealta Ceannanus Mor - A new 4 classroom school reached substantial completion in 2012. Dunshaughlin Community College - A large scale extension project commenced on site in September 2012.

New 1,000 pupil school in Ashbourne, Gaelscoil na Mí, Ashbourne and a New ET school for Ashbourne - my Department has sought the assistance of, and is working closely with, the

relevant Local Authority in relation to identifying and acquiring a suitable sites for the schools. White Cross NS - the project is currently at an early stage 2 of architectural planning. Upon completion of Stage 2(a) and subject to no issues arising, the project will then progress to stage 2(b) which is the final design stage in the architectural planning process and includes the planning application and completion of tender documents.

St Peter's College, Dunboyne and Ratoath Community College – the projects to deliver extensions to the schools were devolved for delivery to Co. Meath VEC. The VEC has appointed a Design Team to each project. The project for St Peter's College is at the early stages of Architectural Planning and Ratoath Community College is at an advanced stage of Architectural Planning.

SN Bheinn Naofa Duleek (Boys and Girls) – the project has been devolved for delivery to the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) and the NDFA has recently appointed a Design Team to advance the project.

Back to School Costs

181. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Education and Skills in view of a recent survey which estimates back to school costs at €487 for primary school children and €620 for secondary school students, the practical steps that could be taken to reduce back to school costs, particularly in the areas of school uniforms, books and voluntary contributions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7971/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Tackling the costs associated with school is a major priority of mine and there are practical steps that schools can take to reduce these costs for parents.

One such step is the establishment of Textbook Rental Schemes by schools. I am very much in favour of schools establishing such schemes. Schools that have such rental schemes can save parents up to 80% of the cost of buying new books. Because of this, I launched “Guidelines for Developing Textbook Rental Schemes in Schools” on 28 January 2013. The Guidelines provide practical advice to primary and post-primary schools on how rental schemes can be established and operated.

These Guidelines along with a Guide for Parents to inform them of how the schemes operate and how parents can help schools to establish and run them are currently being sent out to every school in the country and are also available on my Department's website. They were also made available for the websites of both national parents' councils, Barnardos and the society of St Vincent de Paul.

In addition, I received a commitment from the Irish Educational Publishers Association to limit the publication of new editions of textbooks and to maintain editions of books in print, unchanged for at least six years. The publishers have assured me that they would sell books for rental schemes to schools at substantial discounts. Furthermore, I have once again secured protection of the budget for school book grants at €15 million in 2013. I have previously put on the record of this House my support for any measures that can be put in place to reduce uniform costs for parents including measures such as the use of generic type uniforms or the use of “sew on” crests.

I have raised this matter informally with the National Parents Council at primary level and I recommended that the National Parents Councils – Primary and Post Primary mobilise parents associations to raise this issue with school authorities. It is important that schools are sensitive

to the financial pressures on parents in making decisions, not just about school uniforms but about any matter that has cost implications for parents. The position in relation to voluntary contributions is that the charging of fees by a school is permissible only in the case of recognised fee-charging second level schools.

All other recognised schools are precluded from charging school fees. Voluntary contributions by parents of pupils in such recognised schools are permissible provided it is made absolutely clear to parents that there is no question of compulsion to pay and that, in making a contribution, they are doing so of their own volition. The manner in which such voluntary contributions are sought and collected is a matter for school management; however their collection should be such as not to create a situation where either parents or pupils could reasonably infer that the contributions take on a compulsory character.

Student Grant Scheme Payments

182. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on a Student Universal Support Ireland grant appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7982/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that, in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy, a grant has been refused and a letter outlining the position issued on the 3rd December, 2012.

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.

School Equipment

183. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 72 of 7 February 2013, if he will ensure that the school is given back the bandwidth of at least four as it had prior to Christmas when it was reduced from four to one without delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7984/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that Kilcredan school has had its broadband restored to 4mb from last week.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

184. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive a decision in relation to their Student Universal Support Ireland application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8000/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland, that on 5th February 2013, a request

for further documentation was issued to the student referred to by the Deputy. When the requested documentation is returned the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

FÁS Training Programmes

185. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Skills in relation to the issuing of construction skills certificate scheme and safe pass cards, his views that some work needs to be done in this whole area to ensure that applicants will not have to wait for over 12 months for the cards to be issued as employers will not employ operatives without a valid card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8006/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): This is a day to day operational matter for FAS who are responsible for the management of these schemes. FÁS have informed that they make every effort to process applications for CSCS and Safe Pass registration cards as quickly as possible. As FÁS is not directly involved in the provision of these training programmes there can be delays which are outside of the organisation's control. Delays can also occur in issuing CSCS registration cards due to the legislative requirement for applicants to be in possession of a FETAC certificate. Safe Pass cards are usually dispatched to providers within four to six weeks after completion of the course; this is partly dependant on the provider ensuring that applications and payment are processed without delay.

CSCS cards for new courses are usually dispatched to providers within four months after completion of the course; this is also partly dependant on the provider ensuring that applications are submitted without delay for both the FETAC certificate and registration card. CSCS renewal card applications are normally turned round within three to four weeks.

Bullying in Schools

186. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the alleged bullying of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8020/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I am fully aware of the seriousness of the issue of bullying and it was for that reason that an Anti-Bullying Forum was held in May last year. The Deputy will be aware that I established a working group to address the issue of tackling bullying in schools, including cyber-bullying. The Group produced an Action Plan recommending further measures that can be taken to effectively tackle bullying, including cyber bullying, in schools. I broadly accept the proposed actions in the Action Plan which was published in January. I have asked officials in my Department to commence work on implementing the Action Plan in consultation with teachers, parents and management bodies at first and second-level schools.

My Department's role is to clarify for parents and students how their grievances and complaints against schools can be progressed. Guidance to parents on progressing a concern in relation their child's school is available on my Department's website at www.education.ie. I understand my officials have clarified for the parent of the pupil in question how his complaint should be addressed.

Departmental Expenditure

187. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the total amount spent on outsourced security services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8472/13]

188. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8486/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 187 and 188 together.

My Department spent a total of €506,089.11 on security services and a total of €316,148.81 on cleaning services in 2012. This represents the total expenditure by my Department in 2012 on security and cleaning services provided by private companies (outsourced) for official departmental premises in various locations around the country. These include my Department's main office locations in Dublin, Athlone and Tullamore as well as local and regional premises used by my Department's Inspectorate and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). The figures provided reflect the actual net cost to my Department i.e. excluding amounts which were met by other Government Departments/Agencies in respect of shared offices and/or premises. The following is a list of the companies that provide these services.

Security Company	Cleaning Company
ISS Ireland	ECO Group Services
Senaca Group	Evans Cleaning Services
Superior Alarms Ltd	Grosvenor Cleaning Service
Link Security	O'Gorman Contract Cleaners
KR Security Services	Roberts Contract Cleaning
G4S	Noonans
RMS Security	Kyle Cleaning Services
Safe Zone Ltd	Alchemy Hygiene Ltd
Kennedy Security Ltd	Buckley Cleaning Services
S Security Group	ISS Facility Services
Omega Facility Services	AllPro Services
Noonans	Knights Cleaning Services Ltd
Manguard Plus Ltd	P&M Campbell
Alarm Control Centre	Cavan Industrial Cleaning Service
Crimewatch Security Services	Larry Connor Cleaning Services
-	Corbett Complete Cleaning
-	Emerald Facility Service
-	FM Services Group
-	Elite Cleaning Service
-	ABC Cleaning
-	Whelan Cleaning Systems Ltd

Public Sector Reform Implementation

189. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the progress he has made with regard to implementing the plan Supporting Public Service Reform - eGovernment 2012 – 2015; in particular the progress he has made on publishing appropriate

data in a way that will facilitate re-use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7839/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Since *eGovernment 2012-2015* was launched in April 2012, my Department has been promoting awareness of the content of the Strategy, through bilateral meetings with Public Bodies to agree approaches to progressing and reporting on actions in the Strategy. My Department has also organised a series of events promoting elements of the Strategy, and will arrange further events during 2013. One of these events, co-hosted on 22 November 2012 with Dublinlinked, focussed on Open Data.

The specific implementation of the actions set out in the Strategy, including publishing appropriate data in a way that will facilitate re-use, are the responsibility of each Department and agency. To facilitate easier reporting by Public Bodies a new website, e.gov.ie, was launched on 23 January 2013. A first progress report under eGovernment 2012-2015 will be submitted to Government by the end of the first quarter of this year. I intend to make this report publicly available.

In advance of the progress report being completed, I am pleased to note that a huge amount of public data is being published and that organisations are actively working to ensure that this data is re-usable.

Examples of how public data is being published and re-used include: the cooperation between the Central Statistics Office and the All-Ireland Research Observatory (AIRO) to provide the public with a new set of mapping tools to allow users to take advantage of the massive amount of census data that is available; the Irish Spatial Data Exchange (ISDE) which allows users to search for data or data services from multiple participating Public Bodies; the National Transport Authority's Journey Planner which contains all public transport route and timetable information across all public transport providers; the fixyourstreet.ie facility which allows citizens to report faults to their local authorities. An application programming interface (API) is available and is being used by interested groups; and Oireachtas debates are published in both PDF and machine-readable formats.

Garda Stations Refurbishment

190. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding the proposed new building of the Garda barracks in Athlone, County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7963/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): Current accommodation occupied by An Garda Síochána in Athlone comprises the original Garda Station, the former adjacent Government Offices and the nearby former Eircom premises. It is intended to carry out a major refurbishment project at this location. In that regard, a significant amount of preparatory work has been completed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) on design and contract documentation. Due to current financial constraints, affecting this and other construction projects, it is not possible at this stage to say when tenders will be invited or when construction works will commence on site. The matter will continue to be reviewed in light of the availability of capital funding in the OPW Vote and the priority attached to the project by An Garda Síochána in the context of its overall building programme.

Separate facilities have been provided for the Garda Water Unit in Athlone.

Upward Only Rent Reviews

191. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the steps he is taking to address the competitive disadvantage of businesses locked into pre-2010 leases that continue to include upward only rent clauses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7815/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Land Conveyancing and Law Reform Act, 2009, abolished upward-only rent reviews for all new leases signed on or after 28th February 2010. When the Government came into office, it gave extensive consideration to abolishing upward-only rent reviews in leases signed before 28th February 2010.

The advice received by the Government was that it was not possible to develop a scheme to tackle this issue that would not be vulnerable to a Constitutional challenge or compensation claims from landlords. On the basis of this advice, the Government concluded that it was not feasible to legislate to abolish upward only rent reviews.

However, the Government has taken steps to address the issue where possible. In the Action Plan for Jobs 2012, the Government undertook to place downward pressure on commercial rents where the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) had acquired the loan on the underlying property. NAMA approves requests for rent easement or abatement from its debtors where a tenant demonstrates that the rent payable under the lease is in excess of current market levels and that the viability of a business is, as a consequence, threatened.

I understand that by the end of 2012, NAMA had received 276 eligible applications and had granted 212 applications for rent abatement with an aggregate annual value of €13.5 million. A further 56 applications were under review. Of the 276 eligible applications received, only 8 were refused, representing a 97% approval rate by NAMA. NAMA's Guidance Note on upward only commercial leases is available on the agency's website, www.nama.ie. The agency engages with industry representative bodies in the retail sector to promote understanding of the Guidance Note and its applicability.

In addition, the Property Services (Regulation) Act, 2011, provides for the establishment and maintenance of a Commercial Leases Database by the Property Services Regulatory Authority, which is expected to capture information in relation to the rent agreed and other clauses within commercial leases agreed in the future. I understand that work is under way to ensure that the database will be operational at an early date. The database will go toward enhancing transparency in the commercial property market.

Businesses can, of course, seek to negotiate a rent reduction directly with their landlord, even where upward only rent reviews exist in leases. There are a number of instances where businesses have secured rent reductions through negotiations of this nature.

Departmental Agencies Expenditure

192. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide the data for total Industrial Development Agency, Enterprise Ireland and County Enterprise Board spend by region since 2007. [7884/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Table 1 sets out the grant payments to IDA clients, by Region from 2007 to 2011. The 2012 grant payments

are not yet available as they have not been signed off by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Table 2 sets out the payments made by Enterprise Ireland, by Region between January 2007 and December 2012.

Table 3 sets out the funding by the 35 County and City Enterprise Boards from 2007 to 2012.

The figures in all three Tables show Capital expenditure paid out in the form of grant payments.

A breakdown of the counties within each Region is outlined in Table 1 (a) and Table 2 (a).

Table 1: IDA Ireland Grants Paid on a Regional Basis from 2007 to 2011

Regions	North West	West	Mid-West	South West	Midlands
2007					
2008	€836,217				
2009					
2010					
2011					

Regions	South East Region	East Region	North East Region
2007	€13,928,920	€39,201,479	€348,127
2008	€7,947,182	€37,691,166	€1,245,000
2009	€2,652,596	€39,721,446	€870,882
2010	€19,738,753	€52,440,158	€1,379,552
2011	€5,364,688	€47,712,539	€689,164

Table 1 (a) Breakdown of counties within each IDA Region

North East	North West	Midlands	West	Mid West	South West	South East	East
Cavan	Donegal	Laois	Galway	Clare	Cork	Carlow	Dublin
Louth		Longford	Mayo	Limerick	Kerry		
	Sligo	Offaly		Tipperary North		Tipp South	
						Waterford	Wicklow
		Westmeath				Wexford	

Table 2 - Enterprise Ireland payments by region between January 2007 and December 2012

EI Region	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Dublin/Mid-East						

Dublin/ Mid-East						
Dublin/ Mid-East						
Dublin/ Mid-East						
Total Dublin/ Mid-East						
Mid- lands						
Mid- lands						
Mid- lands						
Mid- lands						
Total Midlands						
Mid- West						
Mid- West						
Mid- West						
Mid- West						
Total Mid-West						
North East/North West						
North East/North West						
North East/North West						
North East/North West						
North East/North West						

Total North East/ North West						
South/ South East						
South/ South East						
South/ South East						
South/ South East						
South/ South East						
South/ South East						
Total South/ South East						
West						
West						
West						
Total West						

Regions	Midlands	South/South East
2007	€3,582,057	€19,256,635
2008	€8,627,968	€40,549,056
2009	€8,446,129	€52,643,285
2010	€10,702,240	€57,531,812
2011	€6,563,049	€30,126,845
2012	€3,804,697	€40,957,173

Table 2 (a) Breakdown of counties within each EI Region

North East/North West	West	Mid-West	Dublin/ Mid East	Midlands	South/ South East
Cavan	Galway	Clare	Dublin	Laois	Carlow
Donegal	Mayo	Kerry	Kildare	Longford	Cork
Leitrim	Roscom- mon	Limerick	Meath	Offaly	Kilkenny
Louth	-	Tipperary North	Wicklow	West- meath	Tipperary South
	-	-	-	-	Waterford
Sligo	-	-	-	-	Wexford

Table 3 - Funding for the County and City Enterprise Boards from 2007 to 2012

CEB	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Carlow						

Cavan						
Clare						
Cork City						
Cork North						
Cork South						
Cork West						
Donegal						
Dublin City						
Dublin Fingal						
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown						
Galway City & Co.						
Kerry						
Kildare						
Kilkenny						
Laois						
Leitrim						
Limerick City						
Limerick County						
Longford						
Louth						
Mayo						
Meath						
Offaly						
Sligo						
South Dublin						
Tipperary NR						
Tipperary SR						
Waterford City						

Questions - Written Answers

Waterford Co.						
Westmeath						
Wexford						
Wicklow						
County	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Carlow						
Cavan						
Clare						
Cork City						
Cork North						
Cork South						
Cork West						
Donegal						
Dublin City						
Dublin Fingal						
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown						
Galway City & Co.						
Kerry						
Kildare						
Kilkenny						
Laois						
Leitrim						
Limerick City						
Limerick County						
Longford						
Louth						
Mayo						
Meath						

Offaly						
Sligo						
South Dublin						
Tipperary NR						
Tipperary SR						
Waterford City						
Waterford Co.						
Westmeath						
Wexford						
Wicklow						

Employment Support Services

193. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide details of current State-identified employment priorities and initiatives directed specifically at the south east region. [7885/13]

194. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the measures he has enacted to tackle unemployment in the south east; and if he will outline those actions, the cost involved and the results in terms of net jobs created or lost. [7886/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 193 and 194 together.

All of the State's enterprise development agencies and local authorities in the South East region have been working together to provide greater focus on addressing the unemployment issue in the South East. Part of the remit of the South East Forum, which I established following the Talk Talk job losses, was to examine ways of ensuring better synchronisation of effort by these agencies and stakeholders in order to avoid duplication, and produce synergies that would lead to job creation and investment opportunities in the region. The South East Action Plan has a number of recommendations which the agencies and stakeholders are charged with implementing. I am satisfied that all these key players in the region have been working together, from within existing budgets, to achieve the Plan's recommendations.

Between 2010 and 2012, Enterprise Ireland approved over €40m to companies in the South East to support a range of activities from Start-up, R&D, Management Development, 'Lean' business processes and expansion. There were a number of significant jobs announcements for the South East in 2012 e.g. the Eishtec Call Centre in Waterford city created 280 Enterprise Ireland-supported jobs; a further 65 Enterprise Ireland-supported jobs new jobs were created by Dawn Meats as a result of a 5 year €300m contract with McDonald's restaurants; the two local Waterford City and County Enterprise Boards have created 59 new jobs; and Danone Baby Nutrition in Wexford announced an investment of €20m in its manufacturing facility which will

create around 45 new jobs at its plant.

The cost of creating and supporting IDA Ireland's jobs in the South East, between 2010 and 2011, was €25m. IDA Ireland has been very active in seeking to win additional investment for Waterford. This is evidenced in the most recent announcement on 12 February that Sanofi, a world-leading healthcare company, will invest €44m in Genzyme's biotechnology campus in Waterford. This follows a €150m investment made more than a year ago, and will ensure that this facility can produce the company's latest product. It provides an indication of the Waterford site's strategic value to the company. Sanofi's investment represents a very positive result for Waterford and Ireland and fits in with IDA Ireland's focus on the life sciences as a key growth area.

All the key State players have been actively pursuing initiatives to facilitate development and job creation in the South East region, and I look forward to continued co-operation and collaboration with real benefits for the region.

Job Creation Issues

195. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if any special initiatives will be undertaken by his Department or the State's industrial promotion agencies to assist in the provision of much needed employment in County Monaghan taking into account the recent loss of jobs at a number of enterprises (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7911/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Supporting new and existing indigenous and foreign-owned businesses, is central to our plans for recovery, growth and jobs.

The Government is addressing job creation and retention through the twin strategies of the Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work. The aim of the Action Plan for Jobs is to support the creation of 100,000 net new jobs by 2016, while the objective of Pathways to Work is to ensure that as many of those jobs as possible go to those who are currently unemployed. The Plan is a whole of Government plan with a national focus across all regions.

The Enterprise Development agencies are at the forefront of implementing the Action Plan for Jobs and continue to ensure that enterprises can maximise their contribution to economic recovery and jobs growth. Despite a very difficult domestic and external economic environment, we are beginning to see the positive impact of the Government's policies. 2012 saw significant net job creation by EI and IDA-supported companies, building on the positive results of 2011 and following successive years of significant net job losses.

My Department has successfully delivered on national actions, such as the establishment of the Microfinance Loan Fund and the Credit Guarantee Scheme, both of which will increase access to finance for enterprises and entrepreneurs throughout the country.

IDA continues to market the North East Region for new inward investment through its Gateway of Dundalk, in line with the Government's National Spatial Strategy (NSS). IDA works closely with its 34 client companies in the North East Region that currently employ circa 3,211 people. At the end of 2012, there were 6 IDA Ireland supported companies in Monaghan employing circa 350 people and IDA continues to promote the county as part of its marketing strategy.

Enterprise Ireland provides a range of supports for High Potential Start-Up (HPSU's) com-

panies including, financial supports, business and marketing advice, mentoring, product development etc. Five HPSU's were created in Monaghan since 2008 with a number of projects in the pipeline. EI also works with Monaghan County Enterprise Board and Monaghan County Development Board in enhancing economic development within the County. Payments of over €4 million were made to EI companies in Monaghan in 2012. To date in 2013, over €100,000 has been approved to Monaghan companies. In 2012, EI client companies employed 3,871 people in County Monaghan.

Ensuring that more micro and small businesses can start up, expand and export is a key pillar of the Government's plans for jobs and growth. In November 2012, I announced that primary legislation will be drafted to dissolve the existing County and City Enterprise Boards and create an enhanced national micro-enterprise support model, delivered through Local Enterprise Offices to be established in each Local Authority area.

Pending the introduction of these arrangements, County and City Enterprise Boards, including Monaghan CEB, will continue to ensure that available funds are targeted to maximise entrepreneurial development and engage and work with micro-enterprises employing less than 10 persons, on an on-going basis, with strong referral to sister agencies to progress the needs of the businesses in their respective areas. In 2012, Monaghan CEB provided funding of €712,306 to micro-enterprises in Monaghan.

I am currently preparing the 2013 Action Plan for Jobs on behalf of the Government, and in that context, am exploring further measures which can be taken to transform our economy and support job creation across all regions of the country.

Written Answers Nos. 196 - 213

Enterprise Ireland Investments

196. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will outline Enterprise Ireland's strategy for supporting Irish initiated or Irish based tech companies that operate in online betting, betting exchange, gambling, competitive social gaming and tipping markets, or that earn revenue from such activities. [7949/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Enterprise Ireland does not support companies that operate in the gambling sector – which includes all companies which earn their revenues from online betting, betting exchange, gambling, competitive social gaming and tipping markets.

According to the policies applied by Enterprise Ireland, no financial or soft supports are offered to companies in the gaming/betting sector (unregulated entities or companies operating under the Gaming and Lotteries Act, 1956 or the Betting Act 1931 (as amended)).

Limited grant-only funding can be approved for Financial Spread-Betting Companies (FSB)/ Contracts for Difference (CFD) providers, only if these companies are regulated by a Financial Services Regulatory Authority. Such financial support is restricted to R&D financial assistance and Feasibility supports that relate to the building of the company's technical capabilities.

Enterprise Ireland does support companies that earn revenue from supplying products or services to companies in the gambling sector (provided the earnings are not directly linked to amounts gambled). There may be rare situations where a company in the gambling sector also

operates in another sector, whether through a “ring-fenced” unit or subsidiary, and provided this other activity is one of the eligible activities permitted under the Industrial Development Acts, Enterprise Ireland may provide support for these other activities and the persons employed in that unit or subsidiary.

Given the very narrow scope of intervention which Enterprise Ireland can pursue legally and in line with policy, the strategy in place for supporting companies in these sectors is to work with Irish companies where the primary activity is the development for sale on world markets of new technologies (or the products and services associated with these new technologies), within the confines of legislation and policy.

Departmental Expenditure

197. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the total amount spent on outsourced security services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8477/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The total spent on outsourced security services by my Department and its Offices for 2012 was €236,210 as detailed as follows:

Company	Amount paid in 2012
Karwall Ltd. – trading as Sentry Security	€32,781
G4S Secure Solutions (Ire) Ltd.	€26,553
Senaca Group	€176,876
Total	€236,210

Departmental Expenditure

198. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8491/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The total spent on outsourced cleaning services by my Department and its Offices for 2012 was €264,451 as detailed as follows:

Company	Amount paid in 2012
Ailesbury Contract Cleaning Limited	€41,274
Derry Court Cleaning Company Limited	€87,435
OCS One Complete Solution Ltd	€25,076
Grosvenor Cleaning Services Ltd	€86,703
Noonan Services Group Ltd	€6,843
Eco Group Services	€17,120
Total	€264,451

Pension Provisions

199. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will advise on a person's position regarding a pension arrangement (details supplied) in County Cork; if she will explain what will happen if a decision of the Pensions Ombudsman is not complied with in this instance; if a general fund is available to meet claims of this nature if a company or employer is not in a position to do so; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7844/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In the event of the failure of a party to comply with a determination of the Pensions Ombudsman, the person concerned or the Pensions Ombudsman can apply to the Circuit Court to make an order directing the party against whom the determination is made to carry out the determination in accordance with its terms.

I understand that the company in question is in liquidation and the Pensions Ombudsman was advised that there was no surplus arising after payment of liquidation expenses leaving no funds available for preferential or unsecured creditors. In such circumstances, it seemed pointless and a waste of financial resource to have an enforcement ordered by the courts, and for that reason the Pensions Ombudsman did not do so. There is no general fund available for cases of this type. However, the Construction Employees Benevolent Fund was established in 1985 and is registered as a charitable trust. This may be helpful to the person concerned as the aim of the Fund is to help relieve financial distress or hardship of individuals and their dependants, working on or formerly engaged in, the construction industry. All claims are dealt with in the strictest confidence.

Departmental Expenditure

200. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide an analysis of the per capita spend by her Department on a regional basis with regard to current and capital spends in the area of social welfare . [7882/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Expenditure information by region as requested by the Deputy is not collated at present by my Department. Social welfare schemes are mainly demand led, and respond to demographic, social and labour market conditions. However, volume based statistics are available. A copy of the Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services report for 2011, which contains statistics relating to recipients of social welfare scheme at county level, was forwarded to the Deputy on 12 February 2013. When the 2012 report is published it will be laid before the Dáil.

Pension Provisions

201. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding current legislation and the way it could impact on the pension entitlements of current employees in Allied Irish Bank should the pension fund be dissolved. [7946/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am not in a position to comment on any individual pension scheme; however, I am aware of the significant challenges facing pension schemes at this time.

In the event of a scheme windup, the assets of a scheme are distributed in accordance with section 48 of the Pensions Act 1990. The statutory order of priority is of no consequence where a scheme winds up with sufficient assets to meet all of its liabilities. In a wind-up situation

where there are insufficient funds to meet all liabilities, all pensioner benefits except post-retirement increases, are given the highest priority after wind-up expenses and additional voluntary contributions made by individuals. The remaining assets are then distributed amongst current and former (not-yet retired) scheme members. The level of scheme funding will determine the extent to which the liabilities of the scheme can be met

I have indicated my intention to change the way in which the assets of a scheme are distributed on the windup of a scheme. A consultation process on this issue was completed in the last quarter of 2012. The consultation process involved engagement with representatives of older people, the pensions industry, employers and trade unions. In addition, my Department engaged external expertise to assess the impact of possible changes on how assets of a scheme are distributed on the windup of a scheme.

The proposals emanating from this process are being considered at present and I will be bringing proposals for change to Government for decision.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

202. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal against refusal of jobseeker's benefit in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo and if the processing of same will be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7776/13]

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 04th December 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 08th January 2013 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer 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.

Question No. 203 withdrawn.

Jobseeker's Benefit Appeals

204. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 104 of 7 February 2012, the reason an appeal in respect of jobseeker's allowance payment was disallowed; if she will review the reduced rate of jobseeker's allowance awarded in this instance taking into account the considerable hardship being experienced by the applicant and their family; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7803/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): As the person concerned is under 25 years of age and living in the family home, parental income is assessable as means. When he applied for jobseeker's allowance on 18th January 2011, the net weekly parental income was below the assessable threshold applicable in his case and, therefore, he was awarded the full age-related weekly rate of jobseeker's allowance. On 17th May 2012, a review of his means showed an increase in the net weekly parental income. As a result, means of €65 per week were

assessed and this amount was deducted from his jobseeker's allowance with effect from 23 May 2012. This decision was appealed to the Social Welfare Appeals Office and on 14th January 2013, the Appeals Officer disallowed the appeal on the grounds that the decision was correct and that means had been assessed in line with the provisions of the legislation. If circumstances change in the future, the person concerned should contact his local social welfare office to seek a review of his means.

Traveller Community Issues

205. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide an update on funding for the Clondalkin Travellers' Development Group bicycle repair shed project, which was expected to have been delivered late last year; if this funding will still be provided, and if so, the date of same; and if it will not be provided, at what stage was it cancelled and the communication there was between her Department and the development group and-or the special initiative on Traveller enterprise in this regard. [7804/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Special Initiative for Travellers (SIT) provides support for practical approaches to redressing the imbalance in Traveller under-employment, to support Travellers already engaged in the Traveller economy and provides other supports, including for training, to address the needs of Travellers. Responsibility for the programmes transferred from FÁS to the Department of Social Protection on 1st January 2012.

The Department proposes to issue contracts in the coming weeks and I expect the contract with Clondalkin Travellers' Development Group will be concluded before the end of February. The overall provision for all contracts under the SIT in 2013 amounts to €750,000.

Social Welfare Appeals Delays

206. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7806/13]

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 05th 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.

Social Welfare Eligibility

207. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a review and impact assessment of the habitual residence condition will be concluded in relation to ethnicity and gender; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7808/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) has applied since 2004 to non-contributory social welfare payments and to child benefit. It is applied uniformly and without distinction as to gender or ethnicity. The HRC guidelines were reviewed in 2011 and the updated guidelines were made available on the Department's website in June 2011 after training had been rolled out to all staff. There is no current review

and impact assessment of HRC in relation to ethnicity and gender, (which are not criteria for assessment) nor is it proposed to introduce such criteria, or conduct such a review.

Departmental Contracts

208. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she has granted any contracts or is considering granting any projects to private companies for the implementation of the pathways to work programmes; and if she will list the private companies involved. [7811/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): On 30 November 2012, following a procurement process, the Department engaged the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (London) to provide expert advice and assistance with the design and delivery of an employment services model on a payment by results basis. Once the design of the model has been completed consideration will be given to the question of contracting private providers of employment services. A number of companies have been awarded contracts for other services under the pathways to work programme. Details of these companies and the services provided are set out hereunder.

Company- Details of Service

Deaglán Ó Caoimh - Translations for Intreo Service

Clare Rowland - Translations for Intreo Service

Tomkins & Co- Trademark Search & Registration

Future Business - Domain Registration for Intreo Service

IDL Ireland - Signs and display material for Intreo Launch

Creative Inc - Design of a corporate identity for the National Employment and Entitlements Service

Language - The design implementation of the new corporate identity for the National Employment Entitlements Service (NEES)

iStock - Images for Intreo Service

Getty Images - Images for Intreo Service

Turner Printing - Print and delivery of leaflet, brochure, compliment slip, headed paper

Kelly Print - Employer information packs

Acron - Internal Intreo signage

Sign-a-Rama - Internal Intreo signage

Question No. 209 withdrawn.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

210. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position re-

garding invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cavan; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7819/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer having fully considered all the available evidence disallowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officers decision.

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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

211. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Offaly may expect a decision on an application for carer's allowance. [7822/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 25th January 2013. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Disability Allowance Appeals

212. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress to date in respect of an appeal for disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7825/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned applied for disability allowance on 1 August 2012. The application, based upon the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds and the person was notified in writing of this decision on 13 September 2012.

The person subsequently appealed this decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office and submitted further evidence in support of their application.

As part of the appeals process, the deciding officer reviewed the original decision in the light of the additional information and decided that the person was medically suitable for disability allowance. The appeal has, accordingly, been withdrawn.

A means test is now being completed and a final decision on her application will be made in due course and the person will be notified in writing of the outcome.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

213. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a review and decision will issue on an appeal for invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7826/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Of-

office has advised me that an appeal, by the person concerned, was registered in that office on 13 November 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer 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.

Written Answers Nos. 214-231

Farm Assist Scheme Payments

214. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 96 of 7 February 2013, if she will provide a breakdown of the amount paid for farm assist for the years 2011 and 2012, on a county basis in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7850/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The information requested by the Deputy is not collated in respect of farm assist. Scheme expenditure statistics are collated on a national basis, volume statistics on a county by county basis are collated and published for recipients of social welfare schemes. At present there is no further update available in respect of the information supplied in response to Parliamentary Question No. 96 of 7 February 2013, which provided 2011 farm assist recipients by county and expenditure for the scheme in 2011 and 2012. When the Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services report for 2012 is completed it will be laid before the Dáil.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

215. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal against refusal of carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; if the appeal will be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7865/13]

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 22nd 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.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

216. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will confirm that

she was received an appeal against the refusal of carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 17 and when this appeal will be decided. [7877/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that no appeal has been received by that office in respect of the person concerned.

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.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

217. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide an update on the carer's allowance in relation to who qualifies and if she will clarify the changes that have been made since budget 2013. [7916/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There was no change to carer's allowance or half-rate carer's allowance in Budget 2013. Carer's allowance is a means tested payment for people who are providing full time care and attention to a person who needs that level of care. Since September 2007, if a person is getting certain social welfare payments and also providing full time care and attention to another person, they can keep their main social welfare payment and also get a half-rate carer's allowance.

The income disregard and means test for carers is the most generous within the social welfare system. A couple under 66 with two children, earning a joint annual income of up to €35,400 can qualify for maximum payment carer's allowance while such a couple earning €59,300 will still qualify for the minimum rate and may also qualify for the household benefits package.

There are currently over 52,000 people in receipt of a carer's allowance payment. The expected expenditure for the scheme in 2013 is €509 million. Of those in receipt of carer's allowance over 23,000 are getting half-rate carer's allowance in addition to another social welfare payment at an annual cost of some €90 million. All carer's allowance recipients are entitled to the annual respite care grant and a free travel pass. The number in receipt of a carer's allowance payment from the Department has increased by more than 150% in the last 10 years from 20,000 in 2001 to 52,000 in 2012. Expenditure on the carer's allowance scheme has increased by almost 220% in the same period.

The rate of the annual respite care grant was reduced from €1,700 to €1,350 in the Budget. This grant is paid automatically to all those in receipt of carer's allowance, carer's benefit and domiciliary care allowance in June of each year. The grant is not means tested and is also available to those people who are not in receipt of one of the above payments but are providing full-time care and attention to a person who needs this care. The estimated expenditure on the respite care grant in 2013 is €110 million.

Question No. 218 withdrawn.

Jobseeker's Allowance Payments

219. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of jobseeker's allowance or benefit in County Meath broken down by gender and age;

and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7945/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The total number of persons in receipt of jobseekers allowance or jobseekers benefit in Local Offices in County Meath at the end of January 2013 was 9,121. The catchment area of these offices, particularly near the border of counties, may include addresses in neighbouring counties (e.g. Dublin), and as such those signing on at a Local Office in Meath may not be resident in the county. A detailed breakdown of this number by scheme, gender, age and Local Office is contained in the following tabular statement.

Number of Recipients of Jobseeker's Allowance by Age, Gender and Local Office located in Meath, 31/01/2013

Office	Age Band	Jobseeker's Allowance		
		Male	Female	
Kells	Under 25	150	104	
	25-29	134	77	
	30-34	149	72	
	35-39	119	50	
	40-44	125	39	
	45-49	92	33	
	50-54	89	30	
	55-59	83	13	
	60-64	52	12	
	65 and over	3	1	
	Total	996	431	1,427
Navan	Under 25	399	249	
	25-29	348	158	
	30-34	369	150	
	35-39	353	138	
	40-44	294	107	
	45-49	243	82	
	50-54	194	70	
	55-59	157	53	
	60-64	108	36	
	65 and over	11	3	
	Total	2,476	1,046	3,522
Trim	Under 25	234	163	
	25-29	219	108	
	30-34	216	91	
	35-39	197	67	
	40-44	167	57	
	45-49	142	44	
	50-54	121	28	
	55-59	93	29	
	60-64	86	27	
	65 and over	5	3	

	Total	1,480	617	2,097
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Number of Recipients of Jobseeker's Benefit by Age, Gender and Local Office located in Meath, 31/01/2013

Office	Age Band	Jobseeker's Benefit		
		Male	Female	
Kells	Under 25	8	7	
	25-29	34	18	
	30-34	44	26	
	35-39	28	16	
	40-44	35	18	
	45-49	26	22	
	50-54	16	13	
	55-59	19	12	
	60-64	13	13	
	65 and over	2	0	
	Total		225	145
Navan	Under 25	36	27	
	25-29	66	56	
	30-34	95	88	
	35-39	83	79	
	40-44	72	69	
	45-49	58	43	
	50-54	45	32	
	55-59	42	31	
	60-64	21	18	
	65 and over	3	4	
	Total		521	447
Trim	Under 25	17	28	
	25-29	57	45	
	30-34	58	65	
	35-39	62	46	
	40-44	50	48	
	45-49	43	36	
	50-54	31	32	
	55-59	34	32	
	60-64	28	20	
	65 and over	2	3	
	Total		382	355

Employment Support Services

220. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in Westmeath who have so far applied for and are taking part in Tús and JobBridge programmes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7969/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton) (Deputy Joan Burton): Tús, the community work placement initiative which became operational in 2011, provides part-time work opportunities for those aged 18 and over, who are unemployed for more than a year. The purpose of Tús is the provision of quality work for those who are unemployed in order to break the cycle of unemployment and to improve a person's opportunities in returning to the labour market.

To date, 142 participants and 5 supervisors/team leaders have completed or are currently serving in-work placements provided by community organisations across county Westmeath. As at 8 February 2013, 87 participants and 5 supervisors/team leaders were actively engaged on Tús. A person cannot apply to participate on Tús. Rather, all selection is undertaken by a random process conducted at local level by the Department, with the selection focussed on those on the Live Register for a year or more and in receipt of a Jobseeker's payment.

The National Internship Scheme, JobBridge, was launched in 2011 to provide work experience placements for interns for a 6 or 9 month period. The aim of the scheme is to assist in breaking the cycle where jobseekers are unable to get a job without experience, either as new entrants to the labour market after education or training or as unemployed workers wishing to learn new skills. Applicants must be currently in receipt of, as their main payment, Jobseeker's Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance, Jobseeker's credits, One Parent Family Payment or Disability Allowance and have been unemployed for a minimum period of 78 days in the preceding 6 months. To date, 352 participants have completed or are currently serving in placements in county Westmeath. As at 8 February 2013, 121 participants were actively engaged on JobBridge.

As part of the budget measures to provide 10,000 additional work placement, internship and training programme places, a further 2,500 placements will be made available under Tús in the coming months. The number of available places on JobBridge will also be increased by 2,500. This is in line with the commitments set out in the Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work.

Mortgage Arrears Proposals

221. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will outline recent developments and proposals in relation to tackling the issue of mortgage arrears and personal debt; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7970/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There is a three-phased approach to provide a comprehensive Mortgage Arrears Information and Advice Service, to assist people in mortgage distress. The approach differentiates between mortgage information and mortgage advice. The first two elements involve the enhancement of the website www.keepingyourhome.ie and the establishment of a Mortgage Arrears Information Helpline within the Citizens Information Board (CIB), both of which focus on the provision of comprehensive mortgage arrears information in particular to people in arrears or pre-arrears.

The third element of the service is the provision of independent financial advice to mortgage holders who are being presented with long term mortgage resolution proposals by their lenders. This advice will be provided by a panel of accountants drawn from members of the main accountancy institutes in Ireland who have agreed to participate and support this independent service.

When a lender is proposing longer-term mortgage resolutions, the lender will advise the borrower to obtain independent financial advice on the proposed arrangement and, if the bor-

rower wishes to avail of this option, then the lender will pay €250 to an accountant of the borrower's choosing for the provision of this advice. The independent financial advice is available to all mortgage holders in respect of a mortgage secured on a primary residence who have been offered long-term forbearance options by their lenders. An operating protocol for the provision of this advice has been agreed between the main accountancy bodies and the Irish Banking Federation. To date, some 2,700 accountants have confirmed to their accounting body that they wish to be part of the panel and their details are listed on a county by county basis on the website www.keepingyourhome.ie.

The Personal Insolvency Act 2012 provides new and more flexible options to address the circumstances of insolvent debtors. Among the non-judicial debt resolution processes to deal with personal debt is the granting of a Debt Relief Notice to persons with no assets or no income with unsecured debts of up to €20,000. With the assistance of an approved intermediary, a person may apply for a Debt Relief Notice which will allow for the full write-off of qualifying unsecured debt after a three year supervision period. The Citizens Information Board, which has the statutory responsibility for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) has agreed to my request that MABS be an approved intermediary for the purpose of processing applications for Debt Relief Notices. Those who can avail of Debt Relief Notices are typically part of the MABS core client cohort of people on low incomes in debt or in danger of falling into debt.

Sanction has been given for 16 temporary staff to be assigned to MABS for up to 2 years, to establish an Approved Intermediary Service (AIS) for the purposes of processing Debt Relief Notices. An implementation process is underway and the CIB/MABS are working closely with the new Insolvency Service to ensure that the AIS will be operational in time for the establishment of the Insolvency Service.

I am confident that these new developments will provide people with the necessary supports to assist them address their debt difficulties.

Disability Allowance Appeals

222. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite a decision on a disability allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7983/13]

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 31st January 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer 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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

223. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a carer's allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and

if she will make a statement on the matter. [7985/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 31st October 2012. The application is currently with a social welfare investigative officer for assessment of means assessment and confirmation that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied. Once the investigative officer has completed and submitted the report a deciding officer will make a decision. The application will be processed as quickly as possible and when a decision is made the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

224. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 121 of 17 January 2013, if and when an oral hearing will take place in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8009/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Further to my response to Parliamentary Question Ref. No. 2195/13, I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that following an initial review of the appeal, an Appeals Officer indicated that an oral hearing might be helpful. In that context, the case was assigned to a different Appeals Officer who, having had an opportunity to examine the case more closely, concluded that an oral hearing was not required and decided the appeal by way of summary decision. The appellant has been notified of the Appeals Officers decision.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

225. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when rent allowance will be approved in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8010/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The rent supplement claim from the person concerned has now been approved. Notification of this decision has now been issued to him and he will receive his first payment at the end of this month including any arrears due.

Social Welfare Benefits Applications

226. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the nature of any contact her Department has had with a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8011/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A letter issued on the 13th February 2013 from the local office manager in Ballyfermot offering to meet with the person concerned in order to advance this issue and to clarify any queries she may have in relation to the matter.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

227. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the rent ceiling and rent support payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8012/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): To date, the person concerned has not made an application for rent supplement to the Department. An application can be sent to the Kildare Rents Unit, P.O. Box 11758, Dublin 24 and the person's entitlement can then be assessed.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

228. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will review the maximum rent levels payable in north Kildare; if she will take account of market pressure and consequent hardship on recipients of rent support; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8013/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The purpose of the rent supplement scheme is to provide short-term support to eligible people living in private rented accommodation whose means are insufficient to meet their accommodation costs and who do not have accommodation available to them from any other source. The overall aim is to provide short term assistance, and not to act as an alternative to the other social housing schemes operated by the Exchequer. There are currently over 87,000 rent supplement recipients for which the Government has provided over €403 million for 2013. Revised maximum rent limits came into force on 1 January 2012 and are in place until June 2013. The emphasis of the rent limit review was to ensure that maximum value for money for tenants and the taxpayer was achieved whilst at the same time ensuring that people on rent supplement are not priced out of the market for private rented accommodation. It is essential that State support for rents are kept under review and do not distort the market in a way that could increase rent prices for others, such as low paid workers and students.

Departmental records show that there were over 4,300 rent supplement claims in payment in County Kildare at the end of 2012, with over 1,000 in North Kildare (in Maynooth, Celbridge, Leixlip and Kilcock). The number of rental properties available in North Kildare is somewhat lower than the numbers available in the rest of the county and therefore impacts on the number of accommodation units available for rent supplement. Department officials dealing with rent supplement tenants will continue to ensure that their accommodation needs are met.

The Department will continue to monitor rent levels throughout the country. The next review of rent limits will take place before June 2013 and any changes to the existing limits will be considered as part of this review.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

229. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the correct level of payment of jobseeker's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8014/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for jobseeker's allowance is currently being processed. The person concerned will be advised of the outcome once the process is complete.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

230. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when entitlement to jobseeker's allowance will be determined in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8015/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for jobseeker's allowance in respect of the person concerned has been awarded and the first payment will be available for collection at the nominated post office on 14th February 2013.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

231. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when rent support will be provided in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8016/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): To date, the person concerned has not made an application for rent supplement to the Department. An application can be sent to the Kildare Rents Unit, P.O. Box 11758, Dublin 24 and the person's entitlement can then be assessed.

Written Answers Nos. 232-49

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

232. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the maximum rent allowable on which rent support can be offered in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8017/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): To date, the person concerned has not made an application for rent supplement to the Department. An application can be sent to the Kildare Rents Unit, P.O. Box 11758, Dublin 24 and the person's entitlement can then be assessed.

Social Welfare Eligibility

233. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when habitual residency will be determined in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8018/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A decision on habitual residency will be made when all requested information has been furnished by the person concerned.

Family Income Supplement Eligibility

234. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when family income supplement will be approved and paid in the case of a person (details supplied) in County

Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8019/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In order to qualify for Family Income Supplement (FIS) the applicant must be engaged in full-time insurable employment as an employee which is expected to last for at least 3 months and be working for a minimum of 38 hours per fortnight or 19 hours per week. The person concerned made a first time application for FIS on 18 June 2012. As the employer certified that she was contracted to work 15 hours per week and payslips supplied by them supported this, the claim was refused. In October 2012 the person concerned sought and received clarification of the decision. The person concerned subsequently appealed the decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office on 26 November 2012. Before the case is referred to the Social Welfare Appeals Office, the department has sought further information from the person concerned regarding her hours worked. On receipt of this information, her entitlement will be re-examined and she will be notified directly of the outcome.

Departmental Expenditure

235. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total amount spent on outsourced security services in her Department; and if she will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8479/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following the transfer and integration of the Community Welfare Service (formerly of the Health Service Executive) and the Employment Services (formerly FÁS), the Department of Social Protection inherited some of these organisations' properties and their contractual services, such as security. The Department of Social Protection provides services from approximately 970 locations throughout the State, being the main or sole occupant in approximately 200 of those locations, and as such, is responsible for various upkeep costs, including cleaning and security. As a result, we paid a total of €2,022,730.27 to 35 different security companies in 2012. However, a rationalisation of our Department's security services has been significantly progressed and there are currently 9 companies providing the service, which are listed as follows:

1. Ashjen Ltd
2. Brinks Ireland Ltd
3. Doran Security Services
4. G4S Security Services (Ireland) Ltd
5. ISS Facility Services

Departmental Expenditure

236. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in her Department; and if she will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8493/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following the transfer and integration of the Community Welfare Service (formerly of the Health Service Executive) and the Employment Services (formerly FÁS), the Department of Social Protection inherited some of these organisations' properties and their contractual services, such as cleaning. The Department

of Social Protection provides services from approximately 970 locations throughout the State, being the main or sole occupant in approximately 200 of those locations, and as such, is responsible for various upkeep costs, including cleaning and security. As a result, we paid a total of €2,507,959.81 to 78 different cleaning companies in 2012. However, a rationalisation of our Department's cleaning (and hygiene) services has been significantly progressed and there are currently 18 companies providing the service, which are listed as follows:

Departmental Expenditure

237. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the total amount spent on outsourced security services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8468/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The information requested is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Departmental Expenditure

238. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8482/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The information requested is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

National Energy Efficiency Action Plan

239. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding energy proposals. [7948/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I intend to publish the second National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) in the coming weeks. This updated Action Plan reaffirms Ireland's commitment to a 20% energy savings target by 2020 in pursuit of our EU obligations. This 20% saving is equivalent to 31,925 Gigawatt hours (GWh) or a reduction in annual CO₂ emissions of around 7.7 Mega tonnes (Mt).

The actions outlined in the Plan are projected to realise more savings than the 20% target, i.e. 34,060GWh of energy savings in 2020, which is equivalent to a 21.1% saving on the baseline period; an overachievement of 1.1 percentage points. Should all measures detailed in the plan reach their full potential by 2020, it is estimated that a potential reduction in energy spend across all sectors of approximately €2.36 billion (at 2011 prices) will be realised. A very significant element of this will be savings in the public sector.

The Plan will contain 97 actions, each of which will play a part in securing a more sustainable energy future for Ireland. Of the 97 actions, the following five will play an integral role in the delivery of the national target: 1. In the Public sector, the introduction of a series of obligations on public sector bodies to address consumption, procurement and reporting of energy use; 2. the establishment of a national Energy Performance Contracting (EPC) process to deliver innovative models of retrofitting and financing of energy efficiency measures in the commercial

and public sectors. This will be underpinned by an Energy Efficiency Fund to which Government has already committed €35 million in the 2013 Budget as seed capital; 3 the introduction of an appropriate Pay-As-You-Save (PAYS) model for Ireland to replace existing exchequer supports for domestic and non-domestic energy efficiency upgrade measures; 4 the Better Energy programme will deliver energy efficiency improvements across a number of sectors including energy saving targets for energy suppliers; and 5.a Cross-Departmental Implementation Group will be established to ensure that all the actions contained in the Plan are delivered.

A key focus of the Action Plan is the public sector, building upon the comprehensive suite of services and programmes provided by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). To date, 15 public sector bodies have signed partnership agreements with the SEAI, targeted at reducing energy consumption in the public sector by 33% in 2020. This year will also see the first public sector energy consumption report published by the SEAI.

The SEAI's work in the public sector programme suggests that savings of 5-15% are possible with good structured energy management practices. The SEAI is promoting this through its energy management tools, Energy MAP and ISO 50001. To date, over 20 local authorities have undertaken Energy MAP training with an average saving of 5-10% after 6-12 months. Another 50 public bodies have also undertaken Energy MAP training with similar results, including the HSE, Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann. A programme called Energy in Education promotes these principles to schools.

Additionally, SEAI's partnership programme is now working with over 40 of the largest energy using public bodies. These organisations are committed at the highest level to excellent energy management and realising their energy saving potential. Through the partnership programme, good energy management practices and tailored supports, these public bodies are well established to deliver early, rapid and significant energy savings. From a pilot of 18 organisations trialling the methodology to track public bodies' progress towards the 2020 target, over 50% of them were well in advance of the 3% per year target. The remaining public bodies will be served on a group basis and will achieve similar impacts.

My Department and the SEAI in 2010 began a 3 year project to develop a Monitoring and Reporting system to track public bodies' progress towards the 33% and 3240GWh targets. To date, over 33,000 meter points have been collated on a database to source the consumption data direct from the meter operators. In 2013 a dedicated software system will be developed which will also integrate with the National Procurement Service (NPS) for procurement purposes and the Environmental Protection Agency for carbon reporting. In Q2 2013 the 2011 progress report will be issued for the top 135 energy using public bodies. In Q4 2013 the 2012 progress report will be issued by the SEAI. It is envisaged that the various initiatives and monitoring process will greatly encourage and motivate public bodies to increase their level of activity.

Special and Commemorative Stamp Programme

240. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if it is intended to issue a stamp in 2014 to mark the bicentenary of the birth of Thomas Davis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7849/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Special and Commemorative Stamp Programme for 2014, which was approved by Government on 18 December 2013, did not include a stamp to commemorate the bicentenary of the birth of Thomas Davis. However, I understand from An Post's Philatelic Advisory Committee that, subject to Government approval, a stamp to commemorate the bicentenary of the birth of

Thomas Davis will now be included as part of the 2014 Programme of Special and Commemorative stamps.

Television Reception

241. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when TG4 HD will begin airing on Saorview and Sky; the reason there has not been a public review of TG4 HD and whether TG4 SD will continue to exist on satellite and cable platforms; if he will report on the amount of content TG4 intends to air in HD; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7997/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The timing of the launch of TG4 HD on SAORVIEW and Sky and other platforms is a matter for TG4 in commercial negotiations with the various platform providers. The development of a full TG4 HD service is one which may take several years, given the level of investment required to, inter alia, build and equip new HD studios.

The current TG4 HD service on UPC is a trial service only and TG4 will use the lessons learnt from the trial to develop and enhance their plans for a future HD service. In the current UPC trial they are offering primarily acquired HD content and upscaled SD content. I understand from TG4 that they do not plan to offer both a HD and SD service in the longer term and that they plan to provide HD service only, whilst ensuring that TG4 can continue to be viewed by those viewers who do not have a HD television set.

Value for Money Reviews

242. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when he will carry out the next value for money reviews of all semi-State bodies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7999/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Value for Money and Policy Reviews are designed to secure improved value for money from public expenditure by providing systematic analysis of expenditure programmes and policies to provide a basis on which more informed decisions can be made on priorities within and between programmes. It is part of a range of measures in this regard including the Review of Capital Investment (2011), which sets out investment priorities for the years 2010-2016. The Review represents a reappraisal of the Government's Public Capital Programme, designed to re-focus investment plans and ready the Irish economy for a return to growth.

The focus of the Value for Money and Policy Reviews is to provide a tool for systematic analysis of programmes and policies rather than agencies per se, and this tool is available, together with guidelines prepared by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on its application, to all of the bodies under the aegis of my Department.

My Department has completed a number of Value for Money and Policy Reviews, most recently publishing two initial reviews on proposed mergers of bodies under the aegis of the Department (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland with ComReg, and Digital Hub Development Agency with Dublin City Council), and participated in a review of merger of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, the Property Registration Authority and Valuation office, which has been led by the Department of Justice and Equality. My Department is currently carrying out a review on the method of financing public service broadcasting.

Departmental Expenditure

243. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the total amount spent on outsourced security services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8470/13]

244. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8484/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 243 and 244 together.

The Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources is accommodated in three office facilities (two buildings in Dublin and one in Cavan), and a geological core store facility. In accordance with Government policy of securing efficiencies in all areas of public expenditure, my Department actively manages all areas of accommodation expenses and has achieved a reduction in the Exchequer provision for the Department under this heading (A1.7) from €1.5 million in 2009, to €0.894 million in 2013, a reduction of 40%.

In 2012 expenditure on cleaning services, which is outsourced, amounted to €161,356.9. The contractors are Ailesbury Contract Cleaning and Kathleen Smith. In 2012 expenditure on outsourced security services amounted to €120,658.96. The companies providing these services were Noonan Services Limited and ISS Ireland Ltd., T/A ISS Facility Services.

My Department is currently engaged in a competitive tendering process in relation to the provision of security and will shortly issue a request for tenders for cleaning services. In addition to achieving reductions in accommodation expenses, considerable savings have also been achieved across a range of services, including mobile telephony, publications, catering, energy costs and training.

Homeless Persons Data

245. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of homeless persons in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7943/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Historically, there has been considerable difficulty in quantifying the numbers of persons homeless at any given time and this is in part a consequence of the volatility within this cohort of housing need. For that reason information on the number of homeless persons in Meath is not available. However, the Housing Agency's Housing Needs Assessment 2008 and 2011 reports break down the categories of housing need, including in respect of homelessness, for all 88 housing authorities nationwide. These are available on my Department's website at www.environ.ie. This statutory assessment of housing need, carried out every three years by all housing authorities, only counts homeless persons where an application has been made to a housing authority. On 6 September 2012, the CSO published its special Census report, Homeless Persons in Ireland and it indicated that 32 persons were either sleeping rough or in accommodation designated for the homeless on the night of 10 April 2011 in the Mid East Region which includes Counties Meath, Kildare and Wicklow. I will shortly publish a policy statement on homelessness. In this statement I will be indicating what I expect from housing authorities and other stakeholders in accelerating progress towards realising the

ambition of eliminating involuntary long-term homelessness.

Wind Energy Guidelines

246. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will ensure that adequate guidelines are put in place before wind turbines are erected in the midlands in order that issues of concern including distance, location, height and noise levels can be given due consideration and attention; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7956/13]

256. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the deadline for public submissions in relation to wind farm development in the midlands will be extended to allow adequate time for interested parties to make contributions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7962/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 246 and 256 together.

The Wind Energy Development Guidelines, which were published by my Department on 29 June 2006, provide advice to planning authorities on catering for wind energy through the development plan process. The guidelines are also intended to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy development and the treatment of planning applications for such developments. This mapping of suitable locations is carried out through the development plan process which makes extensive statutory provision for public consultation. Planning legislation and Regulations provide for extensive public notification of proposed development by way of site notice and notice in a newspaper approved for this purpose.

The planning authority is required, under section 34(3) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, to have regard to any observations or submissions received concerning the proposed development in accordance with the relevant regulations. Furthermore, any person who makes a submission to the planning authority may appeal the decision of the planning authority to An Bord Pleanála. The Board in some instances, at its own discretion, holds oral hearings in relation to cases being considered by it, further adding to the opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. In regard to the review of the wind energy development guidelines, I refer to the reply to Question No. 478 of 12 February 2013 which outlines the intended public consultation stages for the review process.

Building Regulations Amendments

247. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he is planning to sign the statutory instrument that will introduce the Building Control (Amendment) Act 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7768/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Following an extensive public consultation process undertaken in 2012, I am now in the process of 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.

Drawings and particulars demonstrating compliance must also be submitted to the local building control authority. 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. I believe that the measures outlined above are key steps necessary to strengthen the building control system and will be capable of delivering a stronger level of compliance with the requirements of the Building Regulations and a better quality of homes and buildings for consumers.

Household Charge Exemptions

248. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will confirm the criteria that were used to compile a list of unfinished housing estates for the purpose of collecting the household charge; if the same list will be used for exemptions from the local property tax to be introduced this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7778/13]

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 National Housing Development Survey 2011, published by my Department in October 2011, local authorities provided details of all unfinished housing developments in their areas. Unfinished housing developments were divided into four categories as follows: Category one, where the development is still being actively completed by the developer, or where no serious public safety issues exist; Category two, where a receiver has been appointed; Category three, where a receiver has not been appointed and the developer is still in place but effectively inactive; and, Category four, 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 three and four 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. It is a matter for the relevant local authority to interpret and apply the relevant provisions.

In the context of 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) Act 2012 will be prepared. I anticipate that this list will be published shortly.

Fire Stations Upgrade

249. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will intervene in respect of the delay in finalising arrangements for major development works at a fire station (details supplied) in Dublin 24 which was the subject of a previous grant aid announcement by his Department; his views on the urgent need for progress on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7788/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The provision of a fire service in its functional area, including the establishment and

maintenance of a fire brigade, the assessment of fire cover needs, the provision of a premises and the making of such other provisions as it considers necessary or desirable, is a statutory function of individual fire authorities under the provisions of the Fire Services Act 1981 and 2003. Dublin City Council provides the fire service for the four Dublin local authorities – Dublin City Council itself, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin County Councils.

My Department supports fire authorities through the setting of general policy and guidance and the provision of capital funding, including the recoupment (within the overall funding available) of costs incurred by fire authorities in relation to approved construction projects and the purchase of fire appliances and equipment. The current national priority for capital funding is supporting the fire appliance fleet. Dublin Fire Brigade has been approved for 2 new appliances, which are at the tender stage of the procurement process.

A proposal to extend Tallaght fire station was approved in principle in 2006 under the Fire Services Capital Programme. However, given the current constraints on public finances it has been necessary, in keeping with other reductions, to reduce the fire service capital allocations in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Accordingly, my Department is not in a position at present to fund the significant investment (circa €3 million) required to progress the extension of Tallaght Fire Station from the fire services capital programme. As an alternative, in light of the business case made by Dublin City Council in August 2011, my Department approved grant-aid of €300,000 to supplement funding committed by the Council in respect of necessary and urgent works at the fire station. These necessary upgrading works were completed during 2012 and grant-aid of €300,000 was paid by my Department in respect of this.

Written Answers Nos. 250-267

Local Government Reform

250. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will ensure that local development companies will continue to have a significant role in local development; if he will outline the way in which alignment of local government and local development may develop a positive partnership approach to bring more effective delivery of service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7789/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): It is my intention that the expertise and experience of local development companies will be retained in the new structures outlined in Putting People First - Action Programme for Effective Local Government, based on a stronger partnership with local government and other key stakeholders.

In its report, the recommendations of which are incorporated in the Action Programme, the Alignment Steering Group recognised the key strengths of local development companies, in areas such as service planning and delivery. Programme funding will continue to be available to local development companies in respect of their involvement in such work.

The Alignment Steering Group identified the need for a more joined-up approach to service delivery at local level, focused on the targeting of resources at locally identified priorities. The Group recommended *inter alia* the establishment of Socio-Economic Committees – partnerships of public-private, socio-economic interests – within each local authority area with responsibility for planning, oversight and management of all local and community development programming locally.

I believe these Socio-Economic Committees will bring greater strategic coherence to the broad range of local and community development supports at local level, for the benefit of our citizens and communities.

Rural Development Programme Funding

251. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when approval will issue in respect of a project (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7913/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): There is funding of €314m available under Axes 3 & 4 of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013 for qualifying projects. Projects that request funding of €150,000 or more, such as in this case, are required to seek final approval from my Department.

The assessment of such higher value projects usually involves detailed consultations between my Department and the relevant local development company. It frequently necessitates the provision of further documentation or clarifications. I understand that my Department has requested further information for this project from Cavan-Monaghan LEADER and is awaiting its submission.

Unfinished Housing Developments

252. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will list in tabular form the unfinished housing developments in County Meath; his plans to progress these developments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7936/13]

254. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the housing estates taken in hand by Meath County Council in the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7938/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 252 and 254 together.

The National Housing Development Survey 2012 identified a total of 84 unfinished housing developments in the Meath area, of which some 38 were substantially complete. Further details can be found in the Survey, which is available on my Department's website, www.environ.ie

The resolution of the various issues presented by unfinished developments is one of the major challenges faced by my Department and local authorities. The National Co-ordination Committee on Unfinished Housing Developments (NCC), which I chair, is charged with overseeing the implementation of the Report of the Advisory Group on Unfinished Housing Developments, together with the Government's response to the recommendations. The NCC includes representatives from the Irish Banking Federation, local authorities, the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency, NAMA and the construction sector, and real progress is being made with regard to the public safety works required to improve the living conditions of existing residents on some unfinished estates. Under the Public Safety Initiative (PSI), my Department has made allocations totalling some €3.88 million to 21 local authorities from the funding made available to address immediate public safety issues. The types of works that have been approved to date under the PSI include the fencing off of unsecured and hazardous areas, capping of pipes, in-

stallation of street lighting and other works to secure sites. To date my Department has received no funding applications from Meath County Council in this regard.

Queries regarding the taking in charge and provision of services in individual estates should be addressed directly to the relevant local authority. My Department does not collect the information sought.

Property Management Company Issues

253. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the options for residents in housing estates managed by private management companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7937/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department has no function in relation to the operation of property management companies. The Multi Unit Developments Act 2011, which falls under the remit of my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality, regulates the management and operation of such companies.

In the matter of the taking in charge of estates, the legislative provisions in relation to taking in charge are contained in Section 180 of the Planning and Development Act 2000. Section 180 provides, in relation to estates which have been completed to the satisfaction of the planning authority in accordance with the permission, that the planning authority must, if requested to do so by the developer or by the majority of the qualified electors who are owners or occupiers of the houses involved, initiate the procedures in section 11 of the Roads Act 1993 for declaring the road(s) to be public roads, for whose maintenance the local authority will then be responsible. It is a matter for the elected members to decide whether or not to take in charge the roads in question. In relation to estates which have not have been completed to the satisfaction of the planning authority and where enforcement proceedings have not been commenced within the relevant period, section 180 also provides that the planning authority must, if requested to do so by the majority of the residents as defined above (but not the developer), initiate the procedures in section 11 of the Roads Act. Section 180 also provides that, where a planning authority makes an order under section 11 of the Roads Act, it must also take in charge any open spaces, car parks, sewers, water mains or drains within the attendant grounds of the development.

Question No. 254 answered with Question No. 252.

Leader Programmes Administration

255. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the LEADER and RDP funding distributed in County Meath in the past five years; the amount available for 2013; the other funding streams available for local community groups and or sporting groups; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7939/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Axes 3 & 4 (LEADER) of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013, for which my Department has responsibility, continue to facilitate access to significant financial resources for rural communities. One of the objectives of the RDP is to identify and provide appropriate facilities to local communities not otherwise available to them. Accordingly, it may be possible to obtain funding under the RDP for the type of local community and sports groups referred to in the Question.

There are 35 Local Action Groups contracted, on my Department's behalf, to deliver the RDP throughout the country and these groups are the principal decision-makers in relation to the allocation of project funding. €105 million has been allocated nationally for LEADER activities in 2013.

The table details the funds paid under the LEADER + and the RDP programme from 2008 to date for projects undertaken in County Meath.

Programme	Year	€
Leader+	2008	142,161
Rural Development Programme	2009	393,739
Rural Development Programme	2010	696,330
Rural Development Programme	2011	928,640
Rural Development Programme	2012	779,465
Rural Development Programme	2013 (to date)	82,270

Question No. 256 answered with Question No. 246.

Local Government Reform

257. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will meet Killarney Town Council members to discuss his proposals to abolish the town council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7965/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First, sets out Government decisions for a range of measures in relation to local government reform including local authority structures, functions, and governance. Chapter 6 of the Action Programme details policy decisions to replace town councils with a new model of municipal governance to strengthen local government within counties and address weaknesses and anomalies in the current system.

As part of the implementation arrangements of the reform programme, a Working Group has been established to enable the local authority members' associations to participate in the process of implementation of measures relating to local government structures and related matters and accordingly, I do not consider it appropriate to meet with individual local authorities on the matter at this stage.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

258. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide an update on progress being made in relation to Ireland's greenhouse gas mitigation target for 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7972/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Ho-

gan): Based on current projections issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland faces a potential challenge to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by some 20 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO₂ e) over the period 2013-2020 in order to comply with the legally binding requirements of EU Decision 406/2009/EC. In addressing compliance with the Decision, Ireland must follow an emissions reduction trajectory over the eight-year period and achieve an overall 20% reduction in relevant emissions by 2020 compared to 2005 levels. I am satisfied that Ireland is on course to comply with the mitigation trajectory in the first half of the compliance period and I will review progress in terms of meeting the compliance challenge in the years 2017-2020 in light of, *inter alia*, the updated projections which I expect the Agency to issue in the coming weeks and ongoing policy development taking account of the final climate policy analysis report from the NESC Secretariat which I will be releasing shortly.

Water Charges Introduction

259. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline the exemptions to paying the water charge and the criteria to determine same. [7977/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Programme for Government and the Memorandum of Understanding with the EU, the IMF and the ECB provide for the introduction of domestic water charges. It is not intended that domestic water charges will commence before 2014. The Government considers that charging based on usage is the fairest way to charge for water and it has decided that water meters should be installed in households connected to public water supplies. The Government has also decided that Irish Water, a new State-owned water company to be established as an independent subsidiary within the Bord Gáis Éireann Group, will be responsible for the metering programme.

The Water Services Bill 2013, consideration of which will continue in Dáil Éireann this week, will assign the necessary powers to allow Irish Water to undertake the metering programme. The Bill also assigns to the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) the power to advise the Government on the development of a regulatory framework for water services.

Affordability issues will be addressed by my Department and the Department of Social Protection, in consultation with the Regulator, Irish Water and other stakeholders, in the context of developing a water pricing framework. The agreed approach to affordability issues will then be reflected in the charging structure established by the Regulator.

Septic Tank Registration Scheme

260. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a person who has had to carry out remedial works to a septic tank may apply for the grant at this stage or if he or she would have to have the tank inspected before works are carried out; if a homeowner discovers a problem with a system, whether he or she can contact an inspector to arrange a visit, with a view to making a grant application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7990/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): On 17 December 2012 I announced my intention to introduce a grant scheme to provide financial assistance to households whose septic tanks and other domestic wastewater treatment systems are deemed to require remediation following an inspection under the Water Services

(Amendment) Act 2012. The grant scheme will only apply to treatment systems which are the subject of an Advisory Notice issued by a water services authority following an inspection carried out under the 2012 Act and based on the EPA's risk-based inspection plan. Full details of the scheme will be defined in regulations which I will make in advance of inspections commencing later this year.

Voluntary Housing Sector Issues

261. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which he has monitored the situation at an association (details supplied) in County Kildare with particular reference to and assurance that the association is operating in accordance with the regulations affecting such companies; if he has received communication from the local authority or issued any directions or instructions to the local authority in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8021/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 115 and 116 of 7 February 2013 which set out the responsibilities of housing authorities in monitoring the operation of projects funded under the voluntary housing funding schemes and which are managed and maintained by Approved Housing Bodies (AHB's).

My Department will be arranging a meeting with the Director of Service and senior housing officials in Kildare County Council as soon as possible to discuss the council's social housing programme for 2013. Issues pertaining to operation and management of the Léim an Bhradáin housing project will be a specific matter for discussion at this meeting.

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

262. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will give details of the number of social housing and private dwellings that would benefit from energy efficiency retrofitting to on a regional basis. [8044/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Under section 58 of the Housing Act 1966, the management and maintenance of the local authority housing stock, including the compilation and funding of on-going maintenance programmes and pre-letting repairs, is a matter for individual housing authorities. The information requested with regard to the numbers of social houses which would benefit from energy retrofitting works is not available in my Department.

Under my Department's Social Housing Investment Programme, local authorities are allocated funding each year in respect of a range of measures to improve the standard and overall quality of their social housing stock. The programme includes a retrofitting measure aimed at improving the energy efficiency of older apartments and houses by reducing heat loss through the fabric of the building. Over the past two years, the retrofitting measure focussed on improvement works to vacant houses with the objective of returning as many as possible of these dwellings to productive use and combating dereliction and associated anti-social behaviour. Over that period some €52.5 million was recouped to local authorities in respect of improvements carried out to 4,774 dwellings.

I am currently reviewing the terms of the retrofitting measure, in the context of the energy retrofitting work programme for 2013, with a view to possible changes to improve the effective-

ness of the measure. I will be asking local authorities to target those older properties which may lack adequate insulation.

My Department does not collate information on energy performance of private dwellings.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Status

263. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the decisions taken by the previous Government in relation to private waste water systems on foot of the judgement in the European Court of Justice, in October 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8045/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Following the European Court of Justice judgment against Ireland in October 2009 in which the Court found that Ireland had failed to transpose into domestic legislation the requirements of the Waste Directive regarding the disposal of domestic wastewater from septic tanks and other individual treatment systems, my Department commenced the preparation of legislation to ensure compliance with the Court's ruling; this included extensive stakeholder consultations between October and November 2010. On taking office in March, 2011, I prioritised the finalisation of the legislation and this culminated with the publication of the Water Services (Amendment) Bill 2011 on 3 November 2011 and its enactment on 2 February 2012.

Departmental Expenditure

264. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total amount spent on outsourced security services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8473/13]

265. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8487/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 264 and 265 together.

My Department does not employ external security services. A breakdown of expenditure on outsourced cleaning services by my Department since the appointment of the Government to date is set out in the Table. The details for Met Éireann are shown separately. The cleaning services include daily office cleaning, window cleaning and miscellaneous other cleaning, sanitary and laundry services, provided by the various contractors listed in the Tables.

-	Department	-
Year	Costs	List of Contractors
-	€	-

2011	302,295.32	G4S Support Services Ireland Ltd. Noonan Cleaning Service Grosvenor Cleaning Services ISS Ireland Ltd. Springrove Services Ireland Ltd. Canon Hygiene Ireland Ltd. Celtic Linen Emerald Contract Cleaners Initial Healthcare J.E.T. Carpet Cleaning Hygiene Matters Ltd. John Thompson and Sons Ltd. Whelan Cleaning Systems
2012	301,771.43	As above
2013	25,711.85	As above
Total	629,778.60	-
-	Met Eireann	-
Year	Costs	Contractors
-	€	-
2011	41,380.45	Grosvenor Cleaning Services Springrove Services Ireland Ltd. Canon Hygiene Ireland Ltd. Abrade Contract Cleaning Total Cleaning Supplies Ltd. H. Griffin Ltd. Autobar Ireland Ltd. Office/window cleaning services by named individuals
2012	39,825.88	As above
2013	6,383.04	As above
Total	87,589.37	-

Visa Applications

266. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide a breakdown by country of the number of holiday visas applied for to visit here in 2012; and the number that were successful. [7801/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): In 2012, over 88,000 visa applications for travel to Ireland were processed, of which 91% were approved. Of that total, around 39,700 applications (49%) were for “Visit Visas”, which include short-term visas for those who wish to visit family/friends as well as those who wish to visit as independent holiday makers. Just under 35,000 of these (88%) were granted. It is important to note that the grant rate for Visit Visas from prime growth tourist markets, i.e. the seventeen countries covered by the Irish Short Stay Visa Waiver programme, is significantly higher at 96.5% (approximately 21,800 visas granted from around 22,600 applications). Central Statistics Office figures for the first half of 2012 (latest available figures) show that, in total, 43,681 trips to Ireland were made by nationals of these countries. The total number of all types of visas issued to those nationals in the same period was 27,000 indicating that over 16,000 visitors availed of the Visa Waiver

Programme in that time.

The detailed breakdown of these visa applications is currently being processed but I can inform the Deputy that rounded figures for the countries with the top ten highest number of Visit Visa applications are as follows:

Country	No. of applications	No. approved	Approval rate
Russia	6500	6370	98%
India	5300	5050	95%
Nigeria	4300	2900	68%
China	3400	3250	95%
Philippines	2075	1650	79%
Saudi Arabia	1630	1625	almost 100%
Pakistan	1600	1040	65%
Turkey	1450	1400	97%
Ukraine	1200	1070	90%
Thailand	950	850	90%

Asylum Seeker Accommodation

267. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the value of the individual contracts to providers of direct provision accommodation; and if these contracts were advertised and awarded as per the EU public procurement regulations. [7792/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The question relates to the spending and procurement policy of the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), a functional unit of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department, which is responsible for the accommodation of persons while their applications for international protection are being processed. Currently there are 4,836 persons accommodated throughout the State in 35 centres under contract to RIA.

Of the 35 centres in the State, 7 are State owned. That is to say, while the centres are managed by private contractors under contract to RIA, the land and buildings are owned by the State. Details of all centres currently under contract to RIA are available on its website - www.ria.gov.ie

A list comprising the value and other details of all contracts for commercial centres, issued by RIA between 2000 and the end of 2010, has been prepared for the Deputy. Because of the size of this table, it is not possible to insert it into this answer and it is therefore being forwarded to the Deputy separately. As explained in replies to previous Dáil Questions, it is not in the interest of the taxpayer that details of current individual contracts are known to the public or to other parties who are, or may be in the future, engaged in negotiations with RIA. Therefore, details of current contract rates are not provided. The policy is that at the end of January each year a table of contracts is updated to show all financial information up to the end of December two years previously, i.e. at the end of January, 2013 the records are updated to end of December 2010. This policy has been upheld by the Office of the Information Commissioner.

In relation to RIA’s procurement policy, it is important to note that RIA does not lease or rent premises from commercial contractors. Rather, it ‘contracts-in’ a comprehensive range of services and facilities, which include accommodation, food provision, housekeeping etc., for a

fixed sum over the period of the contract.

A distinction needs to be drawn in relation to procurement processes as between RIA's State-owned accommodation centres and the commercially owned and operated centres. The most recent tender process for the management of the State owned centres was carried out last year by way of public competition in accordance with EU Council Directive 2004/18/EC (co-ordinating procedures for the award of public works contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts) as implemented into Irish law by Statutory Instrument 329 of 2006.

In relation to the commercially owned and operated centres, RIA had in the past advertised in the national press for expressions of interest from persons interested in providing accommodation and other ancillary services for asylum seekers. That procurement process was subject to scrutiny in the Value For Money (VFM) review in respect of spending by RIA on asylum seeker accommodation which was published in May, 2010. A copy of this review is in the Oireachtas Library and is also viewable on the RIA website: www.ria.gov.ie. The Review acknowledged the unique challenges in this particular area of procurement, e.g. the unpredictability of demand, the requirement to disperse asylum seekers around the country, local opposition to the opening of new centres, children settled in schools and so on. Among the recommendations of the VFM report was the introduction of a mix of 'contracts for capacity' and 'contracts for availability and occupancy' as well as a 'more open' tendering system in respect of the commercially owned and operated centres in the RIA portfolio.

The completion of the tender competition last year in respect of the management of the State owned centres enabled RIA to begin preparatory work, now well underway, on devising a more open tendering process for the commercially owned centres. As an interim measure, existing contracts are being carried over on short term bases. The contracts, as far as practicable, have introduced a number of elements recommended in the VFM report, for example, contracts involve a mix of 'contracts for capacity' and 'contracts for availability and occupancy' which have the dual purpose of maximising the occupancy of the centre while minimising RIA's expenditure. The task of devising a long term 'open' tender process is a difficult exercise as it has to take account of "non-money" issues such as access to social, educational and health services; adherence to long standing Government policy on dispersal of asylum seekers; as well as a recognition that other State agencies may have already committed resources in a particular region or area.

It is worth noting generally the decline in the number of persons seeking accommodation in the RIA system in recent years which has necessitated the consolidation of the accommodation portfolio. At the end of 2008, RIA was accommodating 7002 persons in 60 centres. At the end of 2012 RIA was accommodating 4,841 persons in 35 centres. During that 4 year period RIA had closed 25 centres and was accommodating 2,161 fewer persons. In that same period, spending on the RIA system declined from €91.5 million to €62.3 million i.e.32%.

Written Answers Nos. 268-285

Departmental Strategies

268. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a revised national Traveller Roma integration strategy will be developed with the active participation of Travellers, Roma, wider civil society and regional and local authorities to address the gaps in the previously submitted strategy identified by the European Commission; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [7809/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I would like to state at the outset that Ireland's National Traveller/Roma Integration Strategy is envisaged to be a living document and as time goes on there is nothing to prevent the development and inclusion of new actions in any of the sectors; therefore the necessity for a revised strategy as suggested by the Deputy does not arise as such at this point.

The Commission's assessment of the national strategies focused on evaluating the Member States' approach to the four key areas of education, employment, healthcare and housing, and on how structural requirements (cooperation with civil society, with regional and local authorities, monitoring, antidiscrimination and establishment of a national contact point) as well as funding are addressed as relevant for their Roma population. In each section of their report, a summary table indicates the Member States that have in place specific measures required by the EU Framework. Ireland was identified in the Commission's report as a Member State with a number of such policies in place.

In fact, contrary to drawing attention to specific gaps in Ireland's strategy, I was pleased to note that the Commission praised measures taken by Ireland in relation to Healthcare for Travellers.

Based on the assessment of all Member States, a set of policy recommendations in each section points to priorities that all Member States should further address, depending on their national circumstances, in order to meet their responsibilities. As I have already stated, the Strategy is a living document and it is envisaged that further actions will be developed for Ireland when and where it is deemed necessary.

The Strategy was developed following a communication from the EU Commission entitled "An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies" (April 2011) which requested that member states would, in proportion to the size of the Roma population living in their territories and taking into account their different starting points, adopt or develop further a comprehensive approach to Roma integration.

As a first step towards a national strategy, all of the initiatives that exist already across Government were brought together so as to include them in a national strategy document. This document thus includes relevant strategies that already exist in the four crucial areas of education, employment, healthcare and housing. It also mentions initiatives in place in the same areas to assist the Roma community who are citizens of the European Economic Area and are legally resident in the country. It should be noted that Traveller representatives are active participants in National Committees dealing with policy in all four areas and, in this way, were involved in the development of these policies.

In relation to Roma specifically, from Ireland's perspective it is important to note that the term "Roma", as defined by the Council of Europe, refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as "Gypsies". By this definition, the vast majority of Travellers/Roma in the Irish State are indigenous Irish Travellers. There are no official statistics on the number of Roma in Ireland. A figure of 3,000 (approximately 0.07% of the population) has been cited by the Roma Support Group Pavee Point. However, the vast majority of Roma in this State are EU citizens and, as such, in terms of immigration controls, are covered by the provision of the European Communities (Free movement of Persons) (No. 2) Regulations 2006. Such persons are not required to register their presence in the State.

The Deputy should be aware that my Department's role in the Strategy is one of coordination while the development of particular policy is a matter for my Government colleagues in the relevant Government Departments. In the Commission's report Ireland was identified as having a strong monitoring and review mechanism for adapting the strategy. Traveller representatives are active participants on National Committees in the various Government Departments dealing with the policy areas mentioned and, it is in this way, that they will be involved in the further development of relevant policies in relation to the strategy.

Garda Vetting of Personnel

269. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the measures that are taken by the Reception and Integration Agency to ensure that staff in accommodation centres for asylum seekers are Garda vetted and trained to work with children and vulnerable adults in view of the fact that this is not included on the standard form employed by the contracted inspectors (details supplied). [7814/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): This question concerns two issues. Firstly, it concerns the welfare and protection of children and vulnerable adults living in direct provision asylum seeker accommodation centres under contract to the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department. Secondly, it concerns the remit of the independent inspections by a Galway based firm, QTS Limited contracted by RIA to carry out inspections in the 35 such centres currently contracted to it throughout the State.

On the latter issue, inspections are carried out not just by QTS Ltd. but also, separately, by RIA staff. These inspections are always unannounced and the inspectors look at all aspects of the accommodation centres in relation to the proprietors' obligations under the contract. The inspections cover such areas as reception, staff cover, menus, food safety and hygiene, facilities being provided, maintenance of the property and fire and safety issues. As explained below, these inspections do not check whether staff have been Garda vetted or have been trained in relation to the welfare and protection of children and vulnerable adults. These matters are indeed of critical importance to RIA but they fall to be dealt with outside that inspection process.

RIA takes the issue of Garda vetting and child protection very seriously. There is a specific unit in RIA called the Child and Family Services Unit, which is fully staffed and whose role is to manage, deliver, coordinate, monitor and plan all matters relating to child and family services for all asylum seekers residing in the direct provision system. It also acts as a conduit between RIA and the HSE, the latter having statutory functions in this area. The Unit is headed up by an official seconded from the HSE who has clinical expertise in the area of child welfare and protection.

Since 2009 Garda Vetting is carried out on all staff of centres under contract to RIA. The procedure to effect this vetting, and why it is not possible to have QTS Ltd. check this on its inspection process, is explained below.

All asylum accommodation centres are operated by private companies under contract to RIA. The responsibility for the employment of staff lies with the private contractor concerned; that is to say, no staff in centres are employed directly by RIA. The second point is that a distinction needs to be drawn between "vetting" and "clearing". "Vetting" is the process by which the Garda Síochána conducts an examination of an individual's record in relation to court convictions and pending prosecutions and, with the person's permission, conveys this information to an authorised person. "Clearing" is the process by which an employer and/or a responsible authority makes a decision, based on the result of the Garda vetting process, as to whether to

employ, or continue to employ (possibly with restrictions), the individual concerned.

It was agreed with the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) based in Thurles, Co. Tipperary that RIA alone would act as the central conduit for all communications between GCVU and RIA accommodation centres. All RIA contractors and their designated contact person in relation to Garda vetting have been vetted and cleared by RIA itself. In respect of all other staff in centres, although the vetting process is conducted through RIA, the ‘clearing’ of employees is a matter for the contractors who, after all, are the employers. It should be noted that, aside from those relating to contractors and designated persons, RIA does not retain any records on centre employees in relation to Garda Vetting. The sole records kept on RIA’s confidential database relate to the employee’s name, when the relevant vetting forms were received in RIA, sent to GCVU, returned by GCVU and submitted to the relevant designated contact person. As this is an ongoing process, contractors have the responsibility of informing RIA of new members of their staff, who need to undergo the Garda Vetting Process. Because RIA itself acts as the conduit for Garda vetting of staff in centres, the issue of having the matter dealt with in the inspection process does not arise.

In relation to training of staff in centres, the HSE has provided ‘Keeping Safe’ child protection training to each centre’s designated officers and other staff members. RIA’s Child Protection Policy is based on the HSE’s “Children First - National Guidelines for the protection and welfare of children”.

Departmental Funding

270. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the overall budget for the Reception and Integration Agency, including a breakdown of the cost of inspections, transfers and staffing; if the weekly allowance received by asylum seekers is part of this budget, and if not, from which budget does it come; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7817/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): RIA is a functional unit of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department, responsible for the accommodation of persons while their applications for international protection are being processed. Currently there are 4,836 persons accommodated throughout the State in 35 centres under contract to RIA.

Expenditure on the direct provision accommodation services in 2012 was €62.3m. A breakdown of this expenditure will be included in RIA’s 2012 Annual Report which will be published later this year. This breakdown will be along the lines of the expenditure breakdown shown in the RIA Annual Reports from 2007 to 2011 inclusive, which are available on its website - www.ria.gov.ie.

In terms of Department of Justice and Equality staff, the total pay element for 2012 was €1,527,822, including pension contributions. The total operating costs for the administration of RIA in 2012, including pay above, was just over €1.7m.

The movement of residents through the dispersal and transfer system, as well as inspections, are an integral part of the functions of RIA staff and it is not possible to differentiate staffing costs between these separate functions. It should be noted that inspections are carried out not just by RIA staff, but also by an independent assessment company, QTS Ltd. Payments to QTS in 2012, amounted to €21,678.25. The Deputy should note that I have answered another Dáil Question (8005/13) today on the subject of QTS Ltd.

The weekly direct provision allowance to asylum seekers is administered by the Community Welfare Service of the Department of Social Protection. It is paid from the DSP Vote, not from any Vote under my aegis.

Insolvency Service of Ireland Issues

271. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on the establishment of the personal insolvency service that is currently in the process of being established; when persons may begin submitting applications to the service; if there is any other information available at this time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7818/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The full operation of the provisions of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 is expected in the early part of 2013.

The Insolvency Service of Ireland aims to open its office, launch its website and commence an information campaign with the issuing of publications and relevant guidelines during March 2013.

The regulatory and IT frameworks required for the Service to accept and process applications for the three new debt arrangements should be in place during Quarter 2 of 2013.

Stardust Fire Issues

272. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will confirm that there were earlier versions of the 2009 Coffey report that was prepared by Mr. Paul Coffey SC into the Stardust disaster of 1981; the reason the earlier report was not published; if that earlier report made different inferences or findings to the published report which was placed before Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7867/13]

273. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to whether any key evidence in the 1982 Keane tribunal report was subsequently withdrawn in the years leading to the 2009 Coffey report or the Stardust disaster of February 1981; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7868/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 272 and 273 together.

I would like to begin, this being the anniversary of the Stardust fire tragedy, by expressing my continuing sympathy for all those affected by the fire, for whom this time of year must be especially difficult.

As the Deputy will recall, the Coffey Report acknowledged the original Tribunal's findings that there is no evidence that the fire was started deliberately and that its cause is unknown. I am not clear as to what the Deputy is referring to in terms of key evidence being withdrawn but am not aware of any recent developments with respect to evidence relevant to the cause of the fire, or to Mr. Coffey's conclusions.

Mr. Coffey submitted his report, which was dated 8 December 2008, to the Government on 10 December 2008 on the basis that he would be in a position to make minor amendments, corrections and clarifications prior to its publication. As was noted in the Dáil debate on the motions relating to the Report on 3 February 2009, Mr. Coffey made a number of amendments

to the report and submitted his final report on 7 January. These amendments were made by Mr. Coffey to ensure the report's clarity and accuracy but did not result in materially different findings or recommendations. As is normal practice, the final report only was published on 23 January 2009.

Alcohol Sales Legislation

274. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when section 9 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008 will commence. [7875/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The position is that the Report of the Steering Group on a National Substance Misuse Strategy which was published last year contains a broad range of recommendations which seek to address the negative consequences of alcohol misuse and alcohol-related harm in this country. The Department of Health is currently developing an Action Plan for submission to the Government in response to the Report's recommendations. Future arrangements for the display and sale of alcohol in mixed trading outlets such as supermarkets and convenience stores will be considered by the Government in the context of that Action Plan.

Garda Stations Closures

275. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will detail the number of Garda stations closed by region since 2007; and the number under active consideration for closure by region. [7892/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Details of any station closures since 2007 are available in the Policing Plans for 2012 and 2013. These plans were lodged in the Oireachtas Library and are also available on the Garda Síochána web site www.garda.ie.

Crime Levels

276. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the crime figures in tabular form and by category for County Meath for each of the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012; the number of gardaí and grade for the same period and presently; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7933/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Síochána Act 2005 makes provision for the compilation and publication of crime statistics by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose.

I have requested the CSO to provide statistics directly to the Deputy.

The personnel strength, by rank, of the Meath Garda Division as at 31 December 2009 - 2012 and 31 January 2013 is as set out in the table below:

Rank	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Chief Superintendent	1	1	1	1	1

Superintendent	4	5	5	3	3
Inspector	5	5	5	4	4
Sergeant	44	48	44	43	43
Garda	261	254	247	245	244
TOTAL	315	313	302	296	295

The Deputy will be aware that the Commissioner is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources, including personnel, throughout the organisation and I have no direct function in the matter. This allocation of resources is constantly monitored in the context of crime trends, policing needs and other operational strategies in place on a District, Divisional and Regional level to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public.

Proposed Legislation

277. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if, following recent criticism by the High Court of practices in the Refugee Appeals Tribunal in S.R. (Pakistan) v. Minister for Justice and the Refugee Appeals Tribunal, 29 January 2013, if he intends to make amendments to the proposed protection review tribunal to address these criticisms in the forthcoming Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill. [7950/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The case referred to by the Deputy concerned a pre-leave judicial review hearing involving a national of Pakistan who sought to have the decision of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal in his appeal quashed. In its judgment, the High Court was critical of the Tribunal's decision in the applicant's appeal citing, inter alia, errors of law and fact. In light of the High Court's judgment the Chairman has informed me that the case has been settled and that the applicant's appeal will be rescheduled to be heard by a different Member of the Tribunal. As the Deputy may be aware, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal is independent in the performance of its functions and the Chairman alone is responsible for the assignment of cases to individual Tribunal members. The Tribunal is currently comprised of thirteen individual Members each of whom represents a division of the Tribunal.

Work on the details of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2010 is ongoing at my Department pursuant to current Government policy which is committed, under the Programme for Government, to "introduce comprehensive reforms of the immigration, residency and asylum systems, which will include a statutory appeals system and set out rights and obligations in a transparent way". The Bill provides, in Part 7, for a Protection Review Tribunal and, in that context, already contains a number of provisions to address issues of the type which arose in the case of concern to the Deputy. Among the functions proposed for the Chairperson of the Protection Review Tribunal under Section 102 of the Bill, for example, is the possibility for him or her to request a member of the Tribunal to review a draft decision in circumstances where the Chairperson considers that the decision is likely to contain an error of law or fact. A member so requested must review the decision and make any amendments considered necessary. In addition, provision is made for the Chairperson to refer any final decision of a member for the direction of the High Court where he or she considers that the decision contains an error of law. These are among the many aspects of the Bill that are under ongoing consideration at my Department, including in cooperation with the Offices of Parliamentary Counsel and of the Attorney General. This process will take into account any relevant findings by the Courts, such as those raised by the Deputy.

As I have outlined previously to the Joint Committee on Justice, Equality and Defence, several hundred amendments to the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill are anticipated, the majority of a technical nature. On that occasion, I also expressed the considered view that instead of engaging in an extremely cumbersome process of tabling hundreds of amendments to the 2010 Bill it would be much more efficient to publish a new and enhanced text. Such an approach can incorporate the many anticipated amendments while addressing key outstanding issues, several of which have been of concern to Members. This proposition was broadly welcomed by the Joint Committee. It remains my objective under this new approach, and mindful of our having to deal with the competing legislative demands of our EU/IMF/ECB Programme commitments, to be in a position to bring a revised Bill to Government for approval and publication later this year.

Proposed Legislation

278. **Deputy Michael Conaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the proposed Legal Services Regulation Bill will include provisions regarding the position of legal executives and their rights; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7989/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The situation in relation to this matter remains as set out in my Written Reply to Questions No. 152 and 154 of 30 January 2013 which I will, therefore, reiterate on this occasion.

The Legal Services Regulation Bill 2011 has completed Second Stage in the Dáil and is awaiting Committee Stage. The Bill does not make any provision in relation to the role or status of “legal executives” nor is any such provision envisaged.

It is clear from the correspondence I have received from the Irish Institute of Legal Executives Ltd that the scope of their proposals to confer legal status and a whole range of functions on such a category of persons is extensive and goes beyond those measures to be introduced under the Legal Services Regulation Bill.

It is evident that the proposals being made by the Irish Institute of Legal Executives Ltd, on behalf of its members, are far-reaching from the fact that they relate *inter alia* to “a right of audience in the District and Circuit Courts, before tribunals and, subject to review, subsequently in all courts”, and to the eligibility of members for quasi-judicial and judicial appointments (e.g as District Court judges or members of Tribunals). These proposals also draw heavily from the regulatory and practise models of England and Wales which do not always correspond to those of our jurisdiction nor to those set out under current Government policy in the Legal Services Regulation Bill 2011.

While recognising that there may be additional benefits and efficiencies to be found for consumers and for the legal services sector in a more developed role for “legal executives”, the far-reaching proposals being made on their behalf at this time lie beyond the scope of the Legal Services Regulation Bill impinging, as they do, on aspects of the courts and the judiciary. Such matters will, therefore, need to be considered separately on their own merits, while others may come to be considered in due course by the new Legal Services Regulatory Authority

Departmental Contracts

279. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the basis on which the contract for inspecting direct provision accommodation centres was awarded to a company

(details supplied); the duration of this contract; if the contract was subject to the EU public procurement regulations; if so, if it was publically advertised per the directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8005/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): This question concerns a Galway based firm, QTS Limited, which is contracted by the Reception & Integration Agency (RIA) to carry out inspections of asylum accommodation centres.

RIA is a functional unit of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department responsible for the accommodation of persons while their applications for international protection are being processed. Currently there are 4,836 persons accommodated throughout the State in 35 centres under contract to RIA.

QTS Ltd. was contracted by RIA following an open competition under the relevant EU Procurement Directive 2004/18/EC dated 31 March, 2004. The tender was published on the Government's procurement website - www.etenders.gov.ie - on 9 September, 2010.

The contract was awarded to the company following an assessment that its tender was the most economically advantageous. Under the terms of the tender document, the contract was awarded on 10 November, 2010 for a 12 month period with the option to extend the contract for a further 24 months. The contract extension was put in place on 11 November, 2011 and will expire on 10 November, 2013. I am informed that RIA has already started drafting a new tender and the target date for its publication on www.etenders.gov.ie is September, 2013.

By way of background, RIA monitors its contract delivery through a series of tools, one of which is an inspection process. The purpose of inspections is to obtain a 'snap-shot' of the physical condition of the building on the day the inspection is carried out and to identify maintenance issues before they become problems. Inspections are carried out not just by QTS Ltd. but also, separately, by RIA staff. These inspections are always unannounced and the inspectors look at all aspects of the accommodation centres in relation to the proprietors' obligations under the contract. The inspections cover such areas as reception, staff cover, menus, facilities being provided, maintenance of the property and fire and safety issues.

Immigration Status

280. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will outline the existing residency status and eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8022/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the person referred to by the Deputy is the subject of a Deportation Order so therefore has no residency status in the State nor does the issue of naturalisation arise. The Deportation Order was signed on 10 September 2009, following a comprehensive and thorough examination of his asylum claim, and a detailed examination of the representations he submitted for consideration under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). His application was also examined under Subsidiary Protection and this was found not to be an issue.

The person concerned has been evading his deportation since 6 October 2009 and should he come to the notice of the Garda authorities, he would be liable to arrest and detention. He should, therefore, present himself to the Garda National Immigration Bureau without any further delay.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Naturalisation Applications

281. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 259 of 8 November 2012, the position regarding the determination of an application for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8024/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that an application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in March, 2012.

The application is at an advanced stage of processing and the applicant will be informed of my decision in due course.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Naturalisation Applications

282. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the determination of eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8025/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that an application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in September 2011.

The application is at an advanced stage of processing and will be submitted to me for decision in due course.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to

INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Naturalisation Applications

283. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the determination of eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 20; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8026/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that the application has entered the final stage of processing and I intend to grant citizenship. A letter has issued to the person referred to by the Deputy asking him to submit the prescribed fee and other documents so he can attend the next citizenship ceremony at which he will make a declaration of fidelity to the Irish Nation and loyalty to the State and receive his certificate of naturalisation.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Naturalisation Applications

284. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which gaps in continuous residency are likely to affect the validity of an application for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8027/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that an application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in July, 2009.

As the person referred to by the Deputy did not confirm on her application form that she intended to reside in the State after naturalisation, one of the statutory conditions for naturalisation, her application was deemed to be ineligible. The person concerned was informed of this in a letter dated 27 July 2009.

Section 15 of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation provided certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are that the applicant must:

- be of full age
- be of good character
- have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the State immediately before the

date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a total residence in the State amounting to four years

- intend in good faith to continue to reside in the State after naturalisation

- have, before a judge of the District Court in open court, in a citizenship ceremony or in such manner as the Minister, for special reasons, allows—

(i) made a declaration, in the prescribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, and

(ii) undertaken to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.

A foreign national who is married to, or is the Civil Partner of, an Irish citizen for at least three years may apply for naturalisation under section 15A of the Irish Naturalisation and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, where they have been continuously resident in the island of Ireland for the year immediately prior to the date of their application and for two out of the four years prior to that year.

Section 16 of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, waive some or all of the statutory conditions in certain circumstances i.e. where an applicant is of Irish descent or of Irish associations; where an applicant is a person who is a refugee within the meaning of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; or where an applicant is a Stateless person within the meaning of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Stateless persons.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 as amended. The on-line Naturalisation Residency Calculator available on the INIS web-site at www.inis.gov.ie can be used as a guide to whether an individual satisfies the naturalisation residency conditions and, if not, give an indication of how long they should wait before making an application.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Deportation Orders Re-examination

285. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will review and defer the proposal to deport in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8028/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned had her case examined in accordance with the provisions of Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999, (as amended), and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996, (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. Refoulement was not found to be an issue here. In addition, no issue arises under Section 4 of the Criminal Justice (UN Convention against Torture) Act, 2000. Consideration was also given to private and family rights under Article 8 of the European Convention on Hu-

man Rights (ECHR).

I am satisfied that the person concerned had her case fairly and comprehensively examined and, therefore, the decision to make a Deportation Order against her is justified. She is therefore illegally present in the State.

A Deportation Order was signed on 17 January 2013. The effect of the Deportation Order is that the person concerned must leave the state and remain thereafter outside the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order is an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Written Answers Nos. 286-303

Question No. 286 withdrawn.

Garda Investigations

287. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made to date in the investigation into a complaint by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8030/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am aware of the case referred to by the Deputy, and I have requested a report on the current position from the Garda authorities. I will contact the Deputy directly when the report is to hand.

Residency Permits

288. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current position in regard to residency-eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8031/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that an application for permission to remain from the person concerned is currently being processed. The person was living in the State for a period of almost 20 months without permission to remain before making the application. I understand that a decision will issue to the person shortly.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Naturalisation Applications

289. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current position in regard to examination and determination of eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 16; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8032/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that an application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in December, 2011.

The application is at an advanced stage of processing and the applicant will be informed of my decision in due course. There is no record of an application for family-reunification having been submitted by the person referred to.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Departmental Expenditure

290. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total amount spent on outsourced security services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8478/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy did not specify what services were covered by the term "outsourced security services" or indicate a specific period of time with regard to the information sought in her question. Accordingly, my Department has interpreted the question as relating solely to outsourced security personnel employed by my Department (and not agencies of the Department) in the calendar year 2012, not including areas such as alarm and security equipment maintenance. Having regard to this interpretation I can inform the Deputy that no monies were expended by my Department on outsourced security services in the calendar year in question.

Departmental Expenditure

291. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8492/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The amount spent on cleaning services from my Department's Vote was as follows, 2011 €228,300.26; 2012 €189,943.19 and to the end of January 2013 €11,143.17. These figures contain payments made in respect of cleaning services, janitorial supplies and other incidental cleaning costs.

Following an EU procurement exercise a Cleaning Services Framework was established to provide cleaning services. This is a simple way to procure these services to my Department at competitive rates from a list of qualified vendors. The starting date for the Framework Agree-

ment was 21 June 2010 and it is for a 4 year term. The five qualified vendors were Grosvenor Cleaning Services; Derrycourt Company Limited; ISS Facility Services; Momentum Support Services Ireland Limited and G4S Support Services and the vast majority of payments were made to these companies.

Defence Forces Properties

292. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Defence if it is proposed to transfer any NCOs currently stationed in Parkgate, Dublin to Newbridge, County Kildare or to any other location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7767/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised that the Defence Forces have no plans to transfer NCOs from Parkgate, Dublin to Newbridge, Co Kildare. However, I am advised on foot of plans for the Director of Public Prosecutions to fully occupy the office accommodation at Parkgate, it will be necessary to relocate Defence Forces personnel currently based there to McKee Barracks.

Departmental Expenditure

293. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Defence the total amount spent on outsourced security services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8471/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): As a result of a number of incidents since their closure, additional security measures have been put in place at Rockhill House, Donegal and Columb Barracks, Mullingar. For obvious reasons it is not my Department's policy to go into specific detail in relation to those measures but I can say that the effectiveness of the security measures are being continuously monitored. Approximately €17,400 per month is being paid in respect of those security measures.

Departmental Expenditure

294. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Defence the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8485/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The table sets out the costs for 2012 incurred by my Department for outsourced cleaning services.

Service Provider for Newbridge, Co. Kildare	Costs - 2012
ALLPRO Cleaning Services	€ 84,000
Service Provider for Renmore, Co. Galway	
Noonan's Cleaning Services	€ 41,500
Service Provider for Civil Defence, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary	
ALLPRO Cleaning Services	€ 24,303

Service Provider for NECC, Kildare St,Dublin 2	
Ailesbury Cleaning Services	€ 3,789
Service Provider for South Leinster St, Dublin 2	
Ailesbury Cleaning Services	€ 1,770
TOTAL	€155,362

Agriculture Industry Age Profile

295. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding offering incentives and encouragement to young persons to take up farming, if he has any specific proposal for the type of person referred to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7796/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Since taking office I have been concerned by the poor age structure in Irish farming. Recent analysis shows that there are more farmers over 80 than under 35 in Ireland. I have been working to encourage more new entrants to take up farming as a career. Budget 2013 saw the extension of key reliefs that were already in place for young new entrants (such as the 100% relief from Stamp Duty and the 100% stock relief for Young Trained Farmers). Extending these reliefs is not straightforward given that there is a requirement for EU State Aid approval for such measures. The deputy will also be aware that changes were made to retirement relief in budget 2012 to encourage inter-generational land transfers.

The correspondence provided by the deputy suggests that course will not help the situation. I believe that education is fundamental to the future of farming. I am delighted that the number of applicants for Teagasc courses has greatly increased the last two years. Teagasc has responded well to this demand and have introduced new courses to cater for a variety of needs. For example Teagasc has recently launched a new Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management (Level 7) in association with University College Dublin (UCD). Teagasc have also developed recently a new Level 6 Specific Purpose Certificate in Farm Administration course to help meet the training requirements for full-time or part-time farmers.

Young people are essential to delivering the smart, green growth being sought under the food harvest strategy. It comes as no surprise to me that the young Entrepreneur of the year is a farmer and used his farming experience to create an innovative product that farmers worldwide are now using. I hope that other entrepreneurial young farmers will follow this example and develop Irish farming so that it becomes a model for others.

Measures to provide targeted support to young farmers are part of the current negotiations on the reform of the CAP and will I hope form part of any final agreement. I have strongly supported the proposal for a top-up for young farmers under pillar 1 of the CAP, and indeed Ireland was one of the first countries to suggest this measure in the negotiations.

I am also happy that the new restructuring relief has been announced in the 2013 budget. This is the result of detailed work which analysed the reasons why the old consolidation relief was not working. I am confident that the new relief in relation to Capital Gains Taxes, once State Aid approval has been received, will be more effective, especially given that Stamp Duty rates have been reduced. Re-structuring is essential for us to meet the Food Harvest 2020 targets. We need to use land more productively and encourage more young farmers to make the best use of the land. A recent EU Commission study found that

'younger [farm] managers tend to perform better than the EU average, with 46% more area and 57% more economic potential for 21% more labour force' [[1] Commission Staff Working Paper, Impact Assessment, CAP towards 2020, Annex 1: Situation and prospects for EU agriculture and rural areas , p. 25. Brussels, 12/10/2011.1].

Ireland has a very low level of land sales, with most land staying within the same family for generations. Only 0.4% of land changes hand in any given year. Young farmers that want to expand need to be able to access land. According to the latest census of agriculture the average farm has 3.8 land parcels. This means that our farmers are wasting time and diesel driving between plots of land, increasing the stress and the risk of accidents. Young farmers will now have an opportunity to consolidate their holdings and increase efficiency. I am hopeful therefore that the measures that I have introduced will encourage more young people into farming and address the age profile imbalance in Irish farming.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

296. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) may expect their REP scheme payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7816/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in June 2009 and received payments for the first three 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. Following this administrative check an Adjusted Plan was requested from the person named on 24 January 2013. When this adjusted plan is received the file will be processed further with the intention of an early resolution and payment in respect of the 2012 scheme year.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

297. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Offaly may expect a decision on an application for single farm payment. [7823/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2012 Single Payment Scheme was received in this case on 6 November 2012. The closing date for submission of applications under the 2012 Scheme was 15 May 2012. However, following the submission of an appeal, it has now been possible to accept the application in view of the exceptional circumstances involved and payment is due to issue shortly. The person concerned is being advised of this positive outcome.

Marine Resources

298. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department is currently leasing Lough Foyle for the purposes of aquaculture activities from the Crown Estates Commission; the duration of the lease as well as the general terms and provisions of the lease; the amount of hectarage that it is currently leasing from the Crown Estates Commission in respect of aquaculture; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [7824/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is not currently involved in any lease in Lough Foyle from the Crown Estates Commission. It is, however, working with the Loughs Agency and other relevant Departments and agencies towards the conclusion of a management agreement for both the Foyle and Carlingford areas in order to facilitate the acquisition by the Loughs Agency of aquaculture licensing functions for these Loughs. The issues involved are complex and involve many stakeholders.

Job Creation Targets

299. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the progress that has been made in terms of employment creation anticipated in the south east and other regions in 2013 for the agri-food and fisheries sectors under the Food Harvest 2020 plan. [7888/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The focus of the Food Harvest 2020 report is to develop the agriculture, food and fishing sector and to leverage the growth envisaged in output and exports in order to protect existing jobs and to create new ones. The 215 recommendations in FH 2020 are largely capacity building measures which are directed at supporting and improving the employment potential of this sector. As such they do not directly lend themselves to annualised job figures. Indeed, the FH2020 report recognised that the greatest scope for employment gains would flow from the increased output in the dairy and aquaculture sectors. These productivity and employment gains will be in medium term, as the abolition of milk quotas will not arise until 2015 and work is ongoing to ensure that aquaculture developments comply with national and EU environmental legislative guidelines.

In relation to assessing the direct and indirect employment potential in the agri-food and fishing sector which could flow from the projected 2020 growth envisaged by the Food Harvest report, a recent academic analysis by a working group, established by the Food Harvest implementation committee, suggested that if the FH2020 growth targets were achieved that around 25,000 additional direct and indirect jobs could be created by 2020.

As part of its work programme, the FH2020 Implementation Committee is actively monitoring the 17 inter-agency projects included by this Department and relevant agencies in the 2012 AJP and has also contributed to the 2013 Action Plan for Jobs which is expected to be published next month.

Farms Data

300. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in County Meath; if he will provide a breakdown of same by size of holding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7941/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Central Statistics Office's Census of Agriculture 2010 showed that there was a total of 4,569 farms in Co Meath. The breakdown by size of holding is in the table.

Farms in Meath - Census of Agriculture 2010

Farm size (AAU) - hectares

< - 5	5 - < - 10	10 - < - 20	20 - < - 30	30 - < - 50	50 - < - 100	> - = 100	Total
71	731	978	651	890	881	367	4,569

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

301. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a rural environmental protection scheme 4 payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7967/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in December 2007 and has received payment for the first four 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. This process is nearing completion in this case and I expect payment in respect of the 2012 scheme year to issue shortly.

Departmental Expenditure

302. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total amount spent on outsourced security services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8467/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In 2012 my Department spent a total of €344,556 on outsourced security services. The companies providing these services are listed in the table.

Name	Address
Alarm Control Centre	Unit 9A, Parkwest Business Park, Dublin 12.
Andrew Broderick Electrical	Main Street, Portarlington, Co. Laois.
AP Systems Ltd.	37A Hebron Business Park, Co. Kilkenny.
Castleguard Security Services	Monaghan Road, Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan.
Daniel Hartnett	Templebrien South, Clonakilty, Co. Cork.
Dowling Security Systems Ltd.	Sunville, St Josephs Road, Mallow, Co. Cork.
F R S Recruitment	Patrick Street, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.
Fogarty Security Services.	16 Church Street, Tipperary Town, Co. Tipperary.
G4S Monitoring IRE Ltd.	2013 Orchard Avenue, Citywest Business Campus, Dublin 24
Group 4 Securicor	51 Bracken Road, Sandyford Ind. Est. Dublin 18.
HSG Zander	Landscape House, Landscape Road, Churchtown, Co. Dublin.

Karwall Ltd	T/A Sentry Security, Wallslough, Waterford Road, Kilkenny.
Lakeland Security Ltd.	Ashe Road, Rathgowan, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.
Link Security & Surveillance.	Station Road, Portarlinton, Co. Laois.
Rapid Response Security Service.	Durhamstown, Bohermeen, Navan, Co. Meath.
Secure All Security	Racecourse Business Park, Parkmore, Galway.
Senaca EU	Tougher Business Park, Newhall, Naas, Co. Kildare.
Synergy Security Solutions	Mayfield Business Park, Old Youghal Road, Cork.
Techskills Resources Ltd.	2 Merrion Place, Dublin 2.
Western Facility Management	Barroe, Sligo, Co. Sligo.

Departmental Expenditure

303. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8481/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In 2012 my Department spent a total of €972,165 on outsourced cleaning services. The companies providing these services are listed in the table.

Name	Address
ABC Cleaning	40-41 Boherbee Tralee Co Kerry.
Advance Cleaning Service	Ahiohill, Co Cork.
AP Corporate Personnel Ltd.	T/A Allpro Services, Technology House, Parkmore, Co. Galway.
Crystal Clean Services	Ballymurphy, Carnmore, Co. Galway.
David Norman	Killincarrig, Delgany, Co. Wicklow.
Emerald Facility Services	Unit 20, Block 5, Prot Tunnel Business Park, Clonshaugh, Co. Dublin.
Evans Cleaning Services Ltd.	Derryhill, Ballydaly, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.
Garvin Cleaning Ltd.	Kincon, Ballina, Co. Mayo.
Grosvenor Cleaning Services Ltd.	64 Heather Road, Sandyford Ind. Estate, Dublin 18.
HSG Zander Ltd.	Landscape House, Landscape Road, Churchtown, Co. Dublin.
ISS Facility Services Ltd.	Citywest Business Campus, Dublin 24.
John Phair	Gullane, Clonakilty, Co. Cork.
Karmaco Ltd.	T/A Woods Environmental Services, Unit 3, 78 Walkinstown Road, Dublin.
McKechnie Cleaning Services Ltd.	Little Island, Co. Cork.

Moore Enterprises Ltd.	E9 Calmont Park, Calmont Road, Ballymount.
Noonan Services Group Ltd.	Hilton House, unit 3, Swords Business Park.
OCS One Complete Solutions Ltd	Airways Industrial Estate, Dublin 17.
Pat Roche Cleaning &Supplies Ltd	Wexford Enterprise Centre, Strandfield Business Park, Co. Wexford.
Roberts Contract Cleaners	P.O. Box 545, Ballinlough, Cork.

Written Answers Nos. 304-21

Health Services Provision

304. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will review the case of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7855/13]

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.

Child Care Services Provision

305. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of childcare providers and places in County Meath; if she will provide details of same in tabular form; the number of vacancies therein and the level of State funding provided for 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7929/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the information sought in this Parliamentary Question is not readily available, I am arranging for the data to be collated and provided directly to the Deputy.

HSE Staffing

306. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of social workers in County Meath for each of the years 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013; the number of vacancies currently unfilled; her plans to fill same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7932/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Information received from the HSE indicates that in County Meath the approved complement of whole-time equivalent social workers in the Children and Families care group in 2011, 2012 and 2013 was as follows:

March 2011	March 2012	January 2013
41.4	41.4	42.4

I have asked the HSE for the relevant information relating to the years 2009 and 2010, and

I will arrange for this to be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is received.

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. The HSE has confirmed that the HSE National Recruitment Service is currently in the process of filling all current vacancies in Co Meath of which there are 7, including 3 'permanent' vacancies and 4 vacancies arising as a result of maternity leave.

Children in Care

307. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children from County Meath in the care of the State; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7944/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has sought the information requested by the Deputy from the HSE and I will provide the Deputy with the information as soon as it becomes available.

Departmental Expenditure

308. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the total amount spent on outsourced security services in her Department; and if she will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8469/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): A total of €5,558 was spent in 2012 by my Department on outsourced security services, which included confidential shredding facilities and internal security systems. The companies involved were Cyclone Shredding and Noonan Services Group.

Departmental Expenditure

309. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in her Department; and if she will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8483/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): A total of €99,953 was spent in 2012 by my Department on outsourced cleaning services, which included provision of cleaning service, essential hygiene materials and window cleaning service. The companies involved were Momentum Support and Embassy Cleaning Services.

Health Insurance Regulation

310. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health if he has requested the Competition Authority to examine private health insurance who are charging and including benefits in a policy that will never be claimed for example maternity benefit for men; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7790/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The inclusion of maternity benefit in all health insurance products is a statutory requirement, as part of a legal obligation on health insurers to

provide a specific minimum level of benefit in all health insurance products sold.

Minimum benefit is one of the key principles on which the Irish private health insurance regulatory system is based. Minimum Benefit Regulations, made under the Health Insurance Acts, require insurers to offer a minimum benefit to every insured person. The key purpose of the Regulations is to ensure the continued availability of the type of broad hospital cover traditionally held as a minimum by the insured population and to ensure that individuals do not significantly under-insure. Minimum Benefit Regulations were introduced in 1996, under Section 10 of the Health Insurance Act, 1994 and cover in-patient, out-patient and day-patient services provided by publicly funded hospitals, private hospitals, registered nursing home and hospital consultants.

The Minimum Benefit Regulations ensure that all consumers obtain an appropriate minimum level of health insurance cover regardless of what plan they purchase and that every plan available is inclusive of a minimum suite of benefits/procedures, some of which are available to the market as a whole and some of which will be applicable specifically to either men or women. Importantly, under Community Rating everybody is charged the same premium for a particular health insurance plan which includes this minimum suite of benefits, irrespective of age, gender and the current or likely future state of their health. Thus, the broad base line of procedures provided by minimum benefit should not be looked at in gender specific terms, but rather as a cohort of procedures that are important to the community of the insured population and thus should be protected and provided as a minimum base to all.

In these circumstances, I do not consider that there is any role for the Competition Authority in the matter.

Departmental Expenditure

311. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an analysis of the per capita spend by his Department on a regional basis with regard to current and capital spends in the area of health . [7882/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Given the complexities regarding the delivery of services, particularly in relation to the provision of specialist acute hospital care, it is not possible based on currently available information to determine accurately a per capita level of revenue expenditure on a regional basis. In respect of capital expenditure many of the projects would serve the health care needs of the whole country, such as the new Children's Hospital, and therefore there would be no basis for breaking expenditure down on a per capita basis within regions. The most recent national per capita expenditure figures on a current and capital basis are €3,001 and €76 respectively.

In tandem with the proposed new HSE governance structures, new administrative structures are being put in place within the HSE to reflect the need for a greater operational management focus on the delivery of key services and greater transparency about funding, service delivery and accountability. Good progress is also being made on the development and implementation of a Money Follows The Patient system which will facilitate more transparent and detailed analysis of expenditure and health care delivery across a range of variables, including regional analysis.

Alcohol Pricing

312. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if in view of the Seanad Public Consultation Committee's recommendations of alcohol and cancer, when he will begin work on introducing minimum pricing; the structural separating of alcohol from other products, labelling and a national campaign to provide health warnings on the links between alcohol and cancer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7766/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that real and tangible proposals are currently being finalised on foot of the recommendations in the National Substance Misuse Strategy report. These proposals cover all of the areas mentioned in the report, including legislation on minimum unit pricing; labelling of alcohol products; and prevention and intervention activities on alcohol. My Department is also working closely with the Department of Justice and Equality, which is responsible for the issue of the structural separation of alcohol from other products in mixed trading outlets.

The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy has considered these proposals and I intend to bring forward specific proposals for consideration by Government as soon as possible. In the meantime, work on developing a framework for the necessary Department of Health legislation is continuing. For example, in conjunction with Northern Ireland, a health impact assessment is being commissioned as part of the process of developing a legislative basis for minimum unit pricing. The health impact assessment will study the impact of different minimum prices on a range of areas such as health, crime and likely economic impact.

Departmental Funding

313. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the amount of grant aid allocated to St. Michael's House over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7771/13]

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.

Departmental Agencies Issues

314. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Health if the Health Information and Quality Authority are reviewing the situation of waiting list times for persons requiring epilepsy monitoring; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7780/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent Authority established to drive continuous improvement in Ireland's health and social care services. The Authority was established as part of the Government's overall Health Service Reform Programme.

The Authority's mandate extends across the quality and safety of the public, private (within its social care function) and voluntary sectors. Reporting directly to the Minister for Health and Children, HIQA has statutory responsibility for:

- Setting Standards for Health and Social Services,
- Social Services Inspectorate,
- Monitoring Healthcare Quality,

- Health Technology Assessment,
- Health Information.

Following enquiries made on foot of the Deputy's question I can confirm that HIQA is not currently reviewing the situation of waiting list times for people requiring epilepsy monitoring.

Graduate Medicine Programme Places

315. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the looming problems regarding a shortage of medical intern places (details supplied); the steps being taken to tackle this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7781/13]

325. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Health the number of intern places available to medical students here next year; if the number of places available will accommodate all medical students applying in view the importance of the intern year and the costs of medical school fees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7851/13]

327. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to deal with the issue of a lack of an adequate number of places for medical school graduates to undertake internships in hospitals here in order that graduates will be in line with the legal requirement of Irish medical schools that graduates have practised here; and if he will be providing for an adequate number of intern places to be made available during 2013 [7854/13]

328. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if, due to the increased number of medical school graduates this year, it is anticipated that in July 2013 that there will be a shortage of intern places for both EU and non EU graduates of Irish medical schools; the way he intends to address this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7856/13]

335. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that due to the increased number of medical school graduates this year it is anticipated that in July 2013 there will be a shortage of intern places for both EU and non EU graduates of medical schools here; his views on whether the current deficit of intern places to medical graduates has come about as a result of State funding of additional medical school places without the corresponding increase in intern places and that this has serious implications for the person involved and that furthermore, the State's investment in undergraduate medical education will be squandered due to these graduates being unable to obtain an intern position, as completing the intern year is a legal requirement in order for graduates of medical schools here to practice here; his plans to address the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7878/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 315, 325, 327, 328 and 335 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 Implementation 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 sufficient 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.

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

316. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when an appointment for the urology clinic in Portlaoise Hospital will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7785/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Improving access to outpatient services is a key priority for the Government. 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 collation and analysis of outpatient waiting time data in a standardised format will reveal the distribution of long waiters across all hospitals. In the first instance, this 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 parallel with reducing the numbers of longest waiters, the SDU will also work with the HSE Clinical Programmes to reform the structure, organisation and delivery of outpatient services to ensure that the right patient is seen and assessed by the right health professional at the right time.

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.

Local Drugs Task Forces Funding

317. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm the arrangements now in place to provide full funding for an estate (details supplied) in Dublin 24; if he will appreciate the importance to the local communities of these projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7786/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department has allocated €50,000 to support community safety fora in the Tallaght Local Drugs Task Force area and a further €50,000 to community safety fora in the Clondalkin Local Drugs Task Force area this year.

This funding will help to secure the long term sustainability of community safety initiatives developed by the estate management groups in Killinarden and Fettercairn in Tallaght, and by community safety fora in North Clondalkin and South West Clondalkin.

South Dublin County Council, the channel of funding for the initiatives, is in the process of putting accountability arrangements in place at a local level in relation to governance of the expenditure.

Hospital Waiting Lists

318. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding surgery in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7799/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to waiting list management in general, the National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2013*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, recently been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists, including minimising hospital initiated cancellations.

In relation to the particular patient cancellation 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.

Maternity Services

319. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if the Coombe Hospital and children's ambulatory care unit, Dublin, will be moving to Tallaght Hospital, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7807/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): A comprehensive review of maternity and gynaecology services in the greater Dublin area was completed in 2008. The KPMG Independent Review of Maternity and Gynaecology Services in the Greater Dublin noted that Dublin's model of stand alone maternity hospitals is not the norm internationally and recommended that the Dublin maternity hospitals should be co-located with adult acute services and that one of the three new Dublin maternity facilities should be built on the site of the new national paediatric hospital. Maternity and paediatric service co-location has advantages for infants with congenital malformations, for foetal medicine or complications which require neonatal surgery. Maternity and adult service co-location has advantages for mothers in providing on-campus rapid and ready access to non-obstetric specialist expertise, and to specialist surgery and intensive care in the case of major obstetric emergency.

The proposal in 2008 was that the National Maternity Hospital be relocated to St Vincent's, the Coombe to Tallaght and the Rotunda to the Mater, and the maternity hospitals have been working with the relevant adult sites to progress this. There will be early discussions with the maternity hospitals regarding their maternity /adult co-location plans in the context of the Government decision to build the new children's hospital on the St James's campus. Notwithstanding this, I am committed to the intent of the report - that the Dublin maternity hospitals be located alongside adult acute services - while also bearing in mind the need to plan for the

provision of tri-located paediatric, adult and maternity services, as is the intention in relation to the new children's hospital.

With regard to the children's ambulatory care unit, the report of the Review Group on the National Children's Hospital (Dolphin report) concluded that the existing plan for the Ambulatory and Urgent Care Centre in Tallaght must be revisited, in light of a decision made about the location of the National Children's Hospital. The number and location of urgent care centres in the Dublin area must be determined now that the decision has been made to locate the new children's hospital on the St James campus. It is envisaged that there will be an urgent care centre or urgent care centres based on consideration of the geographical distribution of attendances and acuity of the patient. The location and number of such centres will be given careful consideration and analysis is underway to inform this in order to reach a decision as soon possible.

Question No. 320 answered with Question No. 15.

Departmental Funding

321. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will detail funding levels for neurological rehabilitation services in this State for the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013; if he will outline the principal facilities and services provided there; average waiting times for access; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7845/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The aim of neuro-rehabilitation is to enable the person to achieve the highest possible level of independence. Desired outcomes range from a return to full independence in social and work situations to a person requiring long-term support and care but with a higher level of independence than in the absence of neuro-rehabilitation. Current services available include acute hospital services; the National Rehabilitation Hospital; multi-disciplinary community services; long-term assisted living supports; and rehabilitative training services. These services are provided directly by the HSE and several non-statutory organisations.

The Department of Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE) have developed and published the "National Policy and Strategy for the provision of Neuro-Rehabilitation Services in Ireland 2011 - 2015". The report recognises that given the current economic climate, the focus in the short to medium term has to be on reconfiguration of services, structures and resources and the enhancement of the skills and competencies required to meet the changing context.

In addition, the Tánaiste and the Minister for Health announced a significant capital development at the National Rehabilitation Hospital, replacing the existing 120 bed complement and therapy accommodation.

I have referred the specific questions regarding funding levels and waiting times to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Written Answers Nos. 322-339

Hospital Staff Issues

322. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will detail the number of neurology specialists in this State; their grade and location; the average waiting

times for appointments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7846/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Subject to overall parameters set by Government, the Health Service Executive has responsibility for determining the composition of its staffing complement. I have asked the Executive to compile the information requested by the Deputy and to reply to him directly.

Health Services Staff Issues

323. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will detail the number of medical rehabilitation specialists in this State; their grade and location; the average waiting times for appointments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7847/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Subject to overall parameters set by Government, the Health Service Executive has responsibility for determining the composition of its staffing complement. I have asked the Executive to compile the information requested by the Deputy and to reply to him directly.

Hospitals Funding

324. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will detail funding levels for community and hospital neurological services in this State for the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013; if he will outline the principal facilities and services provided there; the average waiting times for access; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7848/13]

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.

Question No. 325 answered with Question No. 315.

Proposed Legislation

326. **Deputy Anne Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when he expects legislation on the long term illness scheme to be finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7852/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): 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. Primary legislation is required to give effect to Government commitment to introduce a universal GP service without fees.

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.

An annual budget of €15 million was provided for the first phase of the roll out of GP care without fees.

Questions Nos. 327 and 328 answered with Question No. 315.

Universal Health Insurance Provision

329. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the reasons for the delays being experienced by his Department in the preparation and publication of the White Paper on Universal Health Insurance, and the preliminary document to the White Paper, promised in *Future Health* in November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7857/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government is embarking on a major reform programme for the health system, the aim of which is to deliver a single-tier health service, supported by universal health insurance (UHI), where access is based on need, not on income. Under UHI, everyone will be insured and will have equal access to a standard package of primary and acute hospital services, including acute mental health services. A new Insurance Fund will subsidise or pay insurance premiums for those who qualify for a subsidy.

The reform programme is a major undertaking that requires careful planning and sequencing over a number of years. *Future Health: A Strategic Framework for Reform of the Health Service 2012-2015* highlights the importance of a step-by-step evidence-based approach to achieving an effective, equitable and efficient system and sets out key actions to systematically deliver on reform.

One of these actions is the production of a preliminary document on UHI by end 2012. This Preliminary Paper was produced in December in line with the target. It was considered by the Cabinet Committee on Health in January and will be published very shortly.

The Department is preparing a White Paper on Universal Health Insurance which will provide further detail on the UHI model for Ireland in addition to the estimated costs and financing mechanisms associated with the introduction of universal health insurance. The work involved is both complex and technical, necessitating significant research and financial modelling to support analysis and costing of different design options. This, in turn, demands a wide-range of specialised expertise. The Department is engaged in a process to ensure the provision of this expertise to feed into work on the preparation of the White Paper during 2013. The White Paper will be published as early as possible within the Government's term of office.

It is anticipated that by 2016 the necessary groundwork will be in place to enable us to phase in implementation of UHI, as promised in the Programme for Government.

Health Services Reform

330. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health his plans for consultation, communication and collaboration on his healthcare reform agenda, including consultation with stakeholders including advocacy groups, indicated in *Future Health* to take place in quarter four 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7858/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I fully recognise that effective consultation and collaboration with stakeholders will be crucial for the successful implementation of the reform programme. In the two weeks following the launch of *Future Health*, I met with some 1,500 local clinical and administrative staff and management as well as regional health forums at fourteen different events across the four HSE regions. I am firmly committed to a consultative and collaborative approach to implementation and this will continue throughout the reform process.

Medical Card Applications

331. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health if he will approve an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7860/13]

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

332. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive an appointment for a brain scan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7861/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Improving access to outpatient services is a key priority for the Government. 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 collation and analysis of outpatient waiting time data in a standardised format will reveal the distribution of long waiters across all hospitals. In the first instance, this 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 parallel with reducing the numbers of longest waiters, the SDU will also work with the HSE Clinical Programmes to reform the structure, organisation and delivery of outpatient services to ensure that the right patient is seen and assessed by the right health professional at the right time.

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 Waiting Lists

333. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in Dublin 11 will receive an appointment for Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15; the reason the appointment has been cancelled on numerous occasions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7871/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and hospital involved.

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 Expenditure

334. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the supports available for sufferers of myalgic encephalomyelitis; if he will outline treatment regimes available for these patients; if new drugs are coming to market and if they will be made available here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7873/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME), also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, is generally defined by persistent fatigue accompanied by other specific symptoms. It is a clinical diagnosis usually made after other possible diagnoses have been excluded and the symptoms have persisted. The treatment for ME usually focuses on the management of the symptoms – specific to the individuals.

In relation to supports available for sufferers of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis and treatment regimes I have asked the Health Service Executive to provide the Deputy with information regarding current service provisions for this condition.

In relation to new drugs coming to market before a medicine can be placed on the Irish market the manufacturer has to seek an authorisation from the Irish Medicines Board (IMB) or in the case of certain medicinal products, the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The only new drug the IMB is aware of for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis is Ampligen. However, because of the biotechnology nature of the active substance involved, any application for Ampligen to be made available to European patients has to be made to the EMA. I have no information on whether or not such an application has been received by the EMA.

Question No. 335 answered with Question No. 315.

Primary Care Centres Provision

336. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the number of existing primary care centres there are in the south east region; the number that have been built in the past two years; the number scheduled to be built; and the anticipated timeline for their completion. [7889/13]

337. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if he will set out in tabular form the number of primary care centres by region; and if he will set out in tabular form the geographic spread of proposed new primary care centres on the same regional basis. [7890/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 336 and 337 together.

Primary care infrastructure is being delivered using three mechanisms which are - public private partnership, operational lease and direct-build.

With regard to the PPP process, the current position is that the HSE is engaging with the NDFA to progress the programme and is also 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.

Using the operational lease mechanism the HSE has delivered primary care infrastructure at 30 locations and is continuing its collaboration with the private sector to progress suitable locations. Another two locations are expected to open in Q1 2013. There will always be more construction projects than can be funded by the Exchequer using the direct-build mechanism.

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The Health Service Executive must prioritise healthcare projects including primary care infrastructure within its overall capital envelope taking into account its existing capital commitments and costs to completion over the period.

Work is underway on the Executive's multi-annual Capital Plan 2013-2017. My Department is reviewing the proposals and following up with the HSE where further details may be required. This draft Plan will require my approval with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. Once approved the Executive will publish on its website details of the Plan including primary care facilities to be delivered.

As the delivery of healthcare infrastructure is a service matter the Deputy's question has been referred to the Executive for direct reply on facilities delivered in the south east and nationally.

Hospital Waiting Lists

338. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health if he will take steps to ensure that a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath is admitted to St. James's Hospital, Dublin, for an urgent procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7918/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and hospital involved.

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 Services

339. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if he will list in tabular form the services available at Our Lady's Hospital, Navan, County Meath, in January 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013; to note any changes in services available and the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7925/13]

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.

Written Answers Nos. 340-357

Hospital Waiting Lists

340. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the average and longest waiting time for an outpatient appointment at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda, Our Lady's Hospital Navan and James Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7926/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Improving access to outpatient services is a key priority for the Government. 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 collation and analysis of outpatient waiting time data in a standardised format will reveal the distribution of long waiters across all hospitals. In the first instance, this 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 parallel with reducing the numbers of longest waiters, the SDU will also work with the HSE Clinical Programmes to reform the structure, organisation and delivery of outpatient services to ensure that the right patient is seen and assessed by the right health professional at the right time. 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

341. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if he will list in tabular form staffing numbers and grade at Our Lady's Hospital, Navan, County Meath, in January 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 in the following categories, medical, dental, allied health and social care professionals, science/laboratory, management/admin/ICT, general support staff, technical and maintenance, catering and housekeeping; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7927/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The detailed information sought by the Deputy in relation to staffing numbers at Our Lady's Hospital, Navan is a matter for the HSE and, accordingly, the Deputy's enquiry has been referred to the Executive for direct reply.

Primary Care Centres Provision

342. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if he will list in tabular form, the primary care centres open or planned for County Meath; the staff number and grade therein; the date or planned date of opening; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7928/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The HSE has responsibility for the provision of Primary Care Centres and the maintenance of existing health centres. Therefore, this matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputies.

Question No. 343 answered with Question No. 12.

Question No. 344 answered with Question No. 10.

Services for People with Disabilities

345. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health in view of the fact that there are more than 100 children in County Kerry with autism spectrum disorder awaiting assessment for intervention services, the plans in place to deal with this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7966/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): 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.

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Question No. 346 answered with Question No. 20.

Question No. 347 answered with Question No. 20.

Drugs Payment Scheme Coverage

348. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the position in relation to the approval of the drug ampligen as a reimbursable drug under the GMS in Ireland. [7975/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Before a medicine can be placed on the Irish market the manufacturer has to seek an authorisation from the Irish Medicines Board (IMB) or in the case of certain medicinal products, the European Medicines agency (EMA). In the case of Ampligen, because of the biotechnology nature of the active substance involved, any application for Ampligen to be made available to European patients has to be made to the EMA. I have no information on whether or not such an application has been received by the EMA. The current position, therefore, is that Ampligen has not been authorised to be placed on the market in Europe and consequently does not meet the criteria for reimbursement under the GMS and community drug schemes.

HSE Agency Staff Issues

349. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health when agency workers employed by the Health Service Executive in a company (details supplied), will receive their full entitlement under the Agency Workers Directive; and when back payments will be made. [7976/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Following the enactment of the Protection of Employees (Temporary Agency Work) Act in 2012, the HSE provided guidance to public service employers on the Act, including the fact that the equal pay provisions of the Act have retrospective effect to 5 December 2011. All agency staff employed through agencies contracted by the HSE have now had their basic pay adjusted in accordance with the Act. The question of payment of any outstanding retrospective amounts due to a specific company is a matter for the HSE, and as such, the Deputy's enquiry has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Home Care Packages

350. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in processing an application for a home care package in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 11; and if he will expedite a reply. [7978/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Data Retention

351. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Health if he has any other options to consider before all Guthrie cards from pre-2002 are destroyed; the way his Department is contacting parents of children whose records are involved to ask for their consent before they are destroyed; if an opt out consent system being considered by him; and if he will make a state-

ment on the matter. [7986/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In late 2009 the Data Protection Commissioner received a complaint from a member of the public on the retention of NSCs. The basis of the complaint, which was upheld by the Data Protection Commissioner, was that NSCs should not be retained indefinitely without consent as this breached the Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003. There followed a series of meetings between the Deputy Data Protection Commissioner, representatives from my Department, the Health Services Executive (HSE) and the Children's University Hospital, Temple Street, which resulted in the decision to destroy existing cards that are older than ten years. I received representations from a number of people and organisations, who pointed out their potential value for research. Consequently, I requested the HSE to conduct a review of the decision to destroy these cards. This review examined both the legal and ethical basis for retention of NSCs and the potential use of the existing cards for research purposes. The report and recommendations of the review group were submitted to me in January 2012. The review group supported the decision to destroy cards more than ten years old. Following careful consideration I accepted this recommendation.

However, the review group also explored how the cards could be made available to the research community in a way which is compatible with ethical and legal obligations. It must be remembered that there is no written consent from parents for the retention or use of these newborn screening cards taken before 2002 for research, or other, purposes. In line with its recommendations, the HSE has begun an information campaign offering people the opportunity to have their screening card returned to them, prior to any cards being destroyed. I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy setting out how people can donate, or give consent for the donation of, NSCs for research purposes; and providing details of their information campaign.

Lourdes Hospital Redress Scheme Eligibility

352. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on implementation of the programme for Government commitment in respect of the proposed extension of the Neary redress scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8001/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): A commitment was made in the programme for Government to seek a mechanism to compensate those women who were excluded on age grounds alone from the Lourdes Hospital Redress Scheme. The scheme of redress approved by Government in 2007 was a non-statutory, *ex-gratia* scheme. Awards were determined by an independent redress board in 2007 and 2008. My Department has been engaged in a review to identify the most appropriate mechanism to compensate these women. This review has included taking instructions and legal advice, including advice from the Office of the Attorney General, with a view to bringing proposals to Government for a decision. This process is ongoing, and it is my intention that it will be brought to a satisfactory, legally sound conclusion as quickly as possible.

Question No. 353 answered with Question No. 17.

Health Services Provision

354. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health when the first phase of the national asthma programme will be implemented; the initial actions that will be taken in order to implement the programme; the deadlines for these actions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8003/13]

355. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the reason implementation of the national asthma programme was not prioritised in the 2013 Health Service Executive service plan in view of the fact that there are 470,000 persons in Ireland with asthma, that more than one person per week dies from asthma and in view of the fact that it is a chronic respiratory disease that is particularly prevalent in children, with one in five children here suffering from the disease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8004/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 354 and 355 together.

The HSE is developing programmes to manage patients with chronic diseases in an integrated manner across service settings, resulting in best health outcomes, enhanced clinical decision making and the most effective use of resources. The following priority programmes are particularly relevant to primary care: Stroke; Heart Failure; Asthma; Diabetes; and COPD. The Diabetes programme is the most advanced. The delivery of the National Asthma Programme (NAP) is a priority for progression in primary care settings in 2013. 85% of asthma is managed in primary care, which is in line with the Government's policy of providing care as close as possible to the patient's home. The overarching aim of the NAP is to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with asthma in Ireland and to improve clinical outcomes and the quality of life of all patients with asthma. A key component is improved management of people with asthma in primary care and thereby, avoiding emergency attendance at General Practitioner (GP) out-of-hours services, hospital emergency departments and in-patient admission services. The target is to reduce bed days by 10% per year over three years through implementing the programme's asthma guidelines and national model of care, which is in development. The model of care document will be available by the end of Quarter 1, 2013. In 2011, the first year of programme implementation, there was an 8% reduction in acute hospital bed days for acute asthma.

The initial focus of the work of the NAP has been on the development and implementation of national asthma guidelines based on international best practice, both for acute care and ongoing asthma management. The National Model of Care for Asthma will detail how physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals will work with engaged patients to make the clinical decisions most appropriate to their circumstances and to collaborate with specialist colleagues in providing a safe, seamless experience through their journey within the health system in Ireland. This includes a model for the management of asthma in primary care and the necessary links with secondary specialist services.

It is reported that one person dies from asthma each week, however, the most recent year of validated data is 2009. Studies on asthma deaths internationally, such as Confidential Enquiries in the UK, have shown that up to 90% of asthma deaths have preventable factors. The NAP is developing a proposal to undertake a similar study. Adult Emergency Asthma Guidelines were published in November 2011 and are available on www.hse.ie. These guidelines are being revised at present and will be submitted to the National Clinical Effectiveness Committee (NCEC). Paediatric Emergency Asthma Guidelines have also been developed and will be available for circulation by the end of Q1, 2013. Asthma Control in General Practice (guidelines for managing a patient with asthma in primary care) have been developed and recently approved by the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP). These are currently being circulated.

A self-learning asthma e-learning 6 modular theoretical programme, based on the national evidenced based guidelines and developed by NAP in conjunction with the Asthma Society of Ireland (ASI), is available on <http://www.hseland.ie> and www.asthmasociety.ie for any health care professional who wishes to update their knowledge. This will enable healthcare professionals to underpin their skill sets with theory. There is also a similar programme available for

GPs on the ICGP website.

Medical Card Eligibility

356. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the determination of entitlement to a medical card in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8007/13]

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.

Health Services Provision

357. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when it will be possible to arrange for the further promised assessment in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8008/13]

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.

Written Answers Nos. 358-375

HSE Funding

358. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which budgetary constraints have been applied evenly throughout the health services, with particular reference to ensure the need to maintain frontline services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8033/13]

365. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which it is intended and expected to apply savings across the health services in such a way as to ensure that extra cost-cutting is not required towards the end of the year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8040/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 358 and 365 together.

The level of health services to be delivered within the available funding has been set out in the HSE National Service Plan, which I approved in January. The National Operational Plan is being developed to support the implementation of the NSP 2013. It is intended to finalise the HSE Operational Plan by end February in parallel with the finalisation of regional service plans, and following finalisation, the HSE Operational Plan: Implementing the HSE National Service Plan 2013 will be published.

As I have outlined in this House on previous occasions, I have instructed the HSE that efficiencies must be achieved in the first instance before patient services are affected, and in this regard patient safety must be paramount. As regards regular monitoring of expenditure, there is intensive engagement between officials from my Department and the HSE each month. My Department, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the HSE are working col-

laboratively on a Financial Improvement Programme with a view to strengthening the Executive's financial and performance management and reporting systems during 2013.

Question No. 359 answered with Question No. 20.

HSE Agency Staff Issues

360. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the total number of nurses required in the public health sector in the current year; the number available by way of permanent and or temporary appointment; the number likely to be drawn from agencies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8035/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Subject to overall parameters set by Government, the Health Service Executive has responsibility for determining the composition of its staffing complement. I have asked the Executive to compile the information requested by the Deputy and to reply to him directly.

Nursing Staff Provision

361. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the total number of nurses currently employed in the private sector throughout the health services; the extent to which a comparison is made with the public sector in terms of numbers and pay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8036/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Neither my Department nor the HSE has a function in relation to the number of nurses employed in the private sector. The numbers requested by the Deputy are therefore not available. The Protection of Employees (Temporary Agency Work) Act 2012 provides for equal treatment as between temporary agency workers and direct employees in relation to basic working and employment conditions. Therefore workers employed by a private employment agency and working in the HSE are covered by these provisions.

Hospital Staff Issues

362. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the total number of non-consultant hospital doctors required in the public health service in the current year; the numbers likely to be available; their expected level of pay in view of competition from the private sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8037/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Subject to overall parameters set by Government, the Health Service Executive has responsibility for determining the composition of its staffing complement. I have asked the Executive to compile the information requested by the Deputy and to reply to him directly.

Hospital Procedures

363. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the total number of procedures, medical and surgical, to include day procedures and more extended treatments carried

out in the private and public sectors in the past 12 months; the extent to which costs for comparable procedures have been compared; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8038/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for investigation and direct reply.

Hospital Bed Data

364. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the full complement of general hospital beds currently available on a regional basis throughout the country in the public health sector; the number of similar beds in the private sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8039/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for investigation and direct reply.

Question No. 365 answered with Question No. 358.

Care of the Elderly

366. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the degree to which he will continue to support public sector nursing homes and hospitals caring for older persons in view of the high quality of service available to the public sector, notwithstanding competition from the private sector; if he will ensure that the application of standards by the Health Information and Quality Authority of Ireland are not used as a means to increase the costs in the public sector over the private sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8041/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Both myself and my colleague, the Minister for Health, Deputy James Reilly are committed to the provision of a public nursing home service. At the request of the Minister, the HSE has reviewed the status of its long stay nursing homes, focusing on areas such as ability to meet HIQA standards, environmental issues including age and structure, and location. This review will inform the formulation by the HSE, in collaboration with my Department, of a comprehensive proposal on this issue for the Minister's consideration.

This Government is committed to enhancing the quality of life of older people, maintaining their full potential, supporting them in their homes and communities, providing access to respite care and day care and, when required, providing access to appropriate quality long-term residential care. Our system of regulation and inspection for the nursing home sector was established for the sole purpose of ensuring safety and quality of care for residents and the National Quality Standards that the Deputy refers to are a key component in ensuring this. All nursing homes for older people, whether public, private or voluntary, are subject to the same core standards in relation to quality and safety.

Care of the Elderly

367. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the position at St. Bridget's nursing home, Crooksling, County Dublin with a view to increasing the number of patients there in line with previous levels and that daycare and community service will continue to be supported in line with tradition given the strong community support; and if

he will make a statement on the matter. [8042/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): St. Brigid's Nursing Home, Crooksling was registered as a designated centre for older people by the Health Information and Quality Authority on 25 June 2012.

Prior to registration, significant remedial works were carried out at St. Brigid's to meet fire safety requirements. The Deputy will be aware that the upper units were closed as HSE considered them not to be in a good infrastructural condition.

The HSE has confirmed that 66 beds will remain at present in the newly upgraded lower units and where vacancies arise they will be filled to maintain this capacity. Of these 66 beds, 5 provide a respite service. In addition, day care is provided to an average of 20 patients per day Monday to Friday.

Cochlear Implants

368. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if it is the case that in Europe and the USA bilateral implantation of cochlear implants is standard practice; if it is the case that for resource reasons in this State the standard practice is to use only one cochlear implant; if he will give consideration to changing this practice and move towards bilateral implantation; his views on whether deafness can allow children to be cut off from society and that every effort should be made to ensure children born deaf can play a full role in society; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8043/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In 2009 the UK's National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommended simultaneous bilateral cochlear implantation as best practice for children. No dedicated programme for simultaneous or sequential implantation is being carried out in Ireland at this time. However, some bilateral implantation has already occurred for patients, mainly very young children with certain medical conditions such as a history of meningitis or blindness.

I understand that Beaumont Hospital, HSE Management and the HSE's Audiology Clinical Care Programme (ACCP) have met recently to discuss a joint process to identify the options for developing and resourcing a programme of simultaneous cochlear implantation in children into the future. An important element of this will be the development of clear clinical criteria to prioritise clients for assessment and follow on implantation.

In relation to services for the deaf the Health Service Executive provides funding of in excess of €4m annually to DeafHear (formerly the National Association for the Deaf) to provide a range of services to over 32,500 deaf and hard of hearing people and their families. Some of the services provided by DeafHear include Personal and Family Support Services, an Assistive Technology Service, a Citizens Information Service, Speedtext which assists deaf and hard of hearing people to participate fully in meetings, educational courses etc. and Hearing and Communication Therapy. In addition, DeafHear provide Deaf and Hearing Awareness Training to public and private sectors, bridging the gap between service providers and deaf consumers.

The HSE also provides funding of approximately €4m annually to the Catholic Institute for Deaf People, towards the provision of the residence accommodation at the following services; St. Joseph's School and Residence for Deaf Boys; St. Mary's School and Residence for Deaf Girls; St. Joseph's House for Adult Deaf and Deaf Blind. The school programmes are funded by the Department of Education and Skills.

The HSE National Audiology Review Group Report, published in April 2011, made recommendations to address inconsistencies and shortcomings in audiology services. These recommendations are currently being implemented and are expected to provide improvements in audiology services throughout the country. All aspects of audiology patient management are currently being reviewed with an aim to provide an equal, efficient and effective clinical service. The recommendations being implemented include:

- An Audiology Clinical Care Programme has been put in place under the Clinical Strategy and Programmes Directorate;

- Newborn hearing screening programme has now been rolled out in HSE South, Dublin Mid Leinster and Dublin North East and is scheduled for roll out to HSE West later in 2013.

- A National Clinical Lead for Audiology post will be filled on 1 March 2013 and four Assistant Lead posts will be filled in the 2nd Quarter of 2013

- A unified career structure is being developed; The HSE has sponsored 10 M.Sc. in Audiology students, who will be ready to enter the workforce in the 3rd Quarter of 2013;

- Systems for the collation of activity data and patient management are being developed;

- A procurement exercise for the purchasing of hearing aids, hearing aid fitting systems and audiological assessment equipment has been completed;

- The Bone Anchored Hearing Aid Programme has commenced and roll out will be completed in 2013.

Departmental Expenditure

369. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the total amount spent on outsourced security services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8476/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Security services for my Department are provided by Noonan Services Group Ltd. The total cost for these services in 2012 was €23,675.74 (inclusive of Vat) .

Departmental Expenditure

370. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8490/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Cleaning services for my Department are provided by Direct Cleaning Services. The total cost for this service in 2012 was €229,461.61 (inclusive of Vat)

Public Transport Provision

371. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an analysis of the per capita spend by his Department on a regional basis with regard to

current and capital spends in the area of transport . [7882/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department's Vote 31 budget allocations and provisional outturns are published and available on the website of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. My Department's gross provisional outturn for 2012 expenditure totalled €2.050m comprising current expenditure of €825m and capital expenditure of €1,225m.

I am not clear as to the information being sought by the Deputy in relation to regional information. It is not possible to set out across the entire range of expenditure where the funds are spent because that information is not maintained. A further issue is that much of the spending is channelled through the Department's agencies. A certain amount of information in relation to expenditure for example on regional and local roads can be set out on a county basis. A comparable break-down of all of the public transport subvention would not be possible. I would be happy to assist the Deputy further in response to a more specific request.

Driving Licence Issues

372. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding a driving licence in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7782/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The operation of the driver licensing system is a matter for the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and I have no power to intervene in individual cases. As such, I have referred this matter to the RSA for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy does not receive a reply within ten working days, please contact my private office.

Public Transport Provision

373. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will list in tabular form, the bus routes that operated in County Meath in January 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013; if he will give details of any diminution of service and the reasons for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7930/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Departmental Expenditure

374. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the total amount spent on outsourced security services in his Department; and if he will provide details of the companies providing these services. [8480/13]

375. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the total amount spent on outsourced cleaning services in his Department; and if he will provide details

of the companies providing these services. [8494/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 374 and 375 together.

The information requested by the Deputy is in the process of being compiled at present. I will forward the information as soon as possible.