

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 7, inclusive, answered orally.

Question No. 8 answered with Question No. 6.

Unemployment Levels

9. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on addressing the problem of under-employment across the country; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18954/13]

54. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social Protection the way the Action Plan on Jobs 2013 will tackle the problem of underemployment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18649/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 9 and 54 together.

Underemployment is defined by the Central Statistics Office as a situation where people are working part-time, are willing to work additional hours and are actually available to work those additional hours. The number of people classified as underemployed rose significantly during the crisis, from 81,000 at the end of 2008 to 146,000 at the end of 2011 and remained unchanged through to the end of 2012. This type of increase is typically observed at the start of all downturns and is evidence that some employers put workers on part-time employment as part of an adjustment strategy to cope with the reality of recession. The most recent data indicate that almost one third of all part-time workers are underemployed.

Some people classified by CSO as underemployed receive income support from my Department to supplement their earnings in employment. The number of such casual and part-time workers included in the Live Register, for example, rose from about 20,000 in early 2008 to almost 90,000 at the end of last month. In addition, other persons classified as underemployed may be receiving payments from my Department under the Systematic Short-time Working Scheme, under schemes such as Community Employment and Tús that provide part-time temporary employment, and under other working-age schemes such as the One Parent Family Payment scheme.

A key factor driving this rise in underemployment is the weak labour demand in the domestic economy. The approach to reducing underemployment is the same as that for reducing unemployment. The Government’s primary strategy to tackle both unemployment and underemployment is to create the environment for a strong economic recovery by promoting

competitiveness and productivity through the Action Plan for Jobs. Through the Pathways to Work strategy, we are trying to ensure that persons on the Live Register are in a position to take up full-time job opportunities as they arise. This is being done through a range of activation measures to provide support and assistance to jobseekers combined with a renewed focus on building relations with employers in order to encourage recruitment of people from the Live Register.

Measures of particular relevance to counteracting underemployment are those that incentivise employers to give full-time jobs to persons who are currently on the Live Register (including the underemployed), most notably the Employers PRSI Incentive and the Revenue Job Assist Scheme. These will be replaced in July of this year by JobsPlus, a single simplified programme.

The Part-Time Job Incentive (PTJI) Scheme is intended as a stepping stone to full-time work partly in recognition of the reality of underemployment. It allows certain long-term unemployed people to take up part-time work and get a special weekly allowance instead of their jobseeker's payment. The Department also supports jobseekers to transition to full-time employment through the Family Income Support Scheme.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, the Department provides income support to the underemployed to supplement their earned income, via Jobseeker's Benefit/Jobseeker's Allowance, provided a person is working no more than 3 days a week. Jobseekers payments paid in conjunction with such periods of casual employment may now count towards satisfying the qualifying period for access to the JobBridge Internship programme. Underemployed casual workers are also entitled to access a range of part-time training and education opportunities for unemployed people.

Money Advice and Budgeting Service Remit

10. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Social Protection the role of the Money Advisory Bureau under the new personal insolvency regime; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18939/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): MABS, which comes within the remit of the Citizens Information Board, provides a high quality service which assists people who are over-indebted or in danger of over-indebtedness, in particular those on low incomes. In 2013 some €19 million has been allocated to fund MABS while the Citizens Information Board has a budget of some €47.4 million. I am very pleased that sanction has been given for 16 temporary staff to be assigned to MABS for up to 2 years, to establish an Approved Intermediary Service as part of the new Insolvency Service. The CIB and MABS National Development Limited are working closely to ensure that the appropriate structures are in place within MABS to implement this new and important statutory role. They have also engaged proactively with the Insolvency Service to ensure that the Approved Intermediary Service is fully operational in time for the establishment of the Insolvency Service. The Personal Insolvency Act 2012 provides for a Debt Relief Notice (DRN) for persons with no assets or income with unsecured debts of up to €20,000. With the assistance of an Approved Intermediary, a person may apply for a DRN which will allow for the full write-off of qualifying unsecured debt after a three year supervision period. The Citizens Information Board (CIB), 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 DRNs are typically part of the MABS core client cohort of people on low incomes in debt or in danger of falling into debt.

I am satisfied that MABS will play an important role in the new arrangements for dealing with debt and will continue to provide a high quality personal service to assist people in over-

coming their indebtedness and managing their finances.

Employment Support Services

11. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of staff within her Department committed to employer engagement as part of the pathways to work strategy, the use of private contractors in the INTREO activation service; the number of INTREO offices opened across the State; the amount planned in the future; the amount of money spent on INTREO offices across the State to date in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18942/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): As the Deputy will be aware, the 'Pathways to Work' policy commits to the provision of more regular and on-going engagement and greater targeting of activation places and job opportunities for those who are unemployed. It also aims to increase engagement and incentivise employers to provide more jobs for people who are unemployed. A dedicated Employer Engagement Unit was established in 2012 to coordinate the Department's engagement with employers. The unit includes staff dealing with JobBridge, the European Job Mobility Portal (EURES), and the National Contact Centre, which hosts the Jobs Ireland website, as well as staff providing policy and coordination support to employer engagement across the country. There are over 35 staff working in the Employer Engagement Unit. In addition there are approximately 400 staff in the Department's regional divisions who work on employment services with both employers and jobseekers. As part of this structure there are 13 dedicated officers at senior management level leading the engagement process with employers at a regional level.

Turning to the issue of contracting, as part of its employment service provision, the Department already contracts with other providers for the delivery of both the Local Employment Service (LES) and Job Clubs. Employment services, including career planning, engagement with employers and job search assistance, are provided under contract by these organisations to clients who are activated by the Department. The Department funds this contracted provision to the value of approximately €25m per annum and these organisations employ approximately 390 staff, who are engaged in the provision of these services.

The Department is at present considering how it might supplement its existing delivery capacity through the further expansion of contracting. The Department has engaged external services in a variety of areas such as Local Employment Services and Job Clubs. The Department retained the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI) in November 2012 to provide expert advice with regard to the potential for, and the design of, a contracting model based on a risk sharing payment structure. The Department is currently considering the CESI report and will in due course finalise its own position. It is important to note that, although the term 'private contracting' is used in some quarters to indicate service provision by organisations outside of the direct state sector, experience in other countries indicates that the voluntary and not-for-profit sectors feature strongly in the supply-chain.

As set out in Pathways to Work, the introduction of the new Intreo service is a multi-annual project. The first ten Intreo offices went live in 2012. These are Sligo, Arklow, Tallaght, Kings Inns, Ballymun, Buncrana, Coolock, Dundalk, Finglas and Killarney. A further 2 offices are now providing the full Intreo service in Newcastlewest and Blanchardstown. Preparations are underway in a further 8 offices and it is expected that a total of 43 offices will be delivering the Intreo service by the end of 2013. The remaining offices will be providing the integrated service by the end of 2014.

Expenditure on the rollout of Intreo offices to date in 2013 is estimated at €1.9 million. The estimated final cost for Intreo will be in the region of €8m. These costs are kept under close scrutiny as the Department is committed to securing value for money in implementing the introduction of the various elements of the service. These figures compare favourably to experience in other countries.

Social Welfare Appeals Data

12. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on allowing persons to avail of civil legal aid when making appeals either written or oral or both to the Social Welfare Appeals Office; her views on the need to publish the decisions of social welfare appeals officers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18973/13]

47. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she plans to address the fact that the Appeals Office is not independent in view of the fact that it must adjudicate on decisions of her Department, of which is it a part, and appeals officers are employees of her Department, appointed by her and may return to another section after working in the Appeals Office leading to a lack of public confidence in its ability. [18843/13]

51. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will introduce a database of appeals decisions that would be accessible to the public in view of the fact that appeals decisions could be considered quasi-judicial in character. [18835/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 12, 47 and 51 together.

The social welfare appeals process has a statutory basis in both primary and secondary legislation. In this context, Appeals Officers are quasi-judicial officers and are required to be, and are, free and unrestricted in discharging their functions.

The appeals system was reformed in 1990 to establish the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) as a separate executive office with its own premises and staff operating independently of the Department. In the twenty years since that reform there has been no sustained or concerted criticism relating to the independence of the office or the impartiality of its Appeals Officers. The independence of the office is evidenced by the high level of appeals which were allowed in favour of the appellant (50.4%) in 2012. This issue a searchable, anonymised database was the subject of a recent High Court case, *Ikraam Jama v Minister for Social Protection*, 11 October 2011. The Judge in that case found that there was no duty on the SWAO to maintain a database for public access. In the course of that challenge, comparisons were drawn with the Social Security Commissioners in Northern Ireland, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal and the Equality Tribunal who do publish their decisions. In 2010, the Social Security Commissioners in Northern Ireland finalised 141 decisions, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal finalised 2,783 and the Equality Tribunal finalised 322 whereas the Social Welfare Appeals Office finalised 28,166 decisions in the same period.

Given the volume of social welfare appeals which are decided annually (32,558 appeals were decided in 2012), the provision of such a database would be a vast and resource-intensive undertaking. For example, in creating and maintaining such a database, it would not be enough to remove names and addresses, all personal information would have to be removed so that not even a family member could recognise the case. Equally, examining anonymised cases could also be misleading given the wide range of variables between the circumstances of different individuals and where the slightest variation between circumstances might mean a different conclusion would be arrived at.

However, it is recognised that there is a clear need to strike a balance between achieving effectiveness and efficiency in administering the appeals system and the need to ensure fair and equitable access to customers. In this regard, the number of case studies published on the Social Welfare Appeals Office website was increased by 100 last year and it is proposed to publish a similar number this year.

While civil legal aid is not available to appellants, my Department provides funding to a number of organisations to provide information, advice and advocacy services on a wide range of public and social services, including the Social Welfare Appeals process. These organisations include the Citizens Information Board, the National Advocacy Service, which focuses particularly on people with disabilities, and the INOU which focuses on the unemployed. In addition, funding is also provided to the Northside Community Law Centre to provide information, advice and representation on legal matters.

Departmental Staff Data

13. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of medical assessors currently employed by her Department; if the new panel of medical assessors has now been created; the number of persons on this panel; the number of additional medical assessors due to be recruited this year and expected start date of each; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18701/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There are currently 23 Medical Assessors employed in my Department, including the Chief Medical Adviser and the Deputy Chief Medical Adviser. All of the staff in question serve on a full-time basis. As an exception to the current moratorium on recruitment in the civil and public service, my Department received sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to hold a competition to appoint Medical Assessors, with a view to filling critical vacancies that had arisen following the retirement of a number of serving Medical Assessors. In addition, and in view of the critical control role that Medical Assessors play in assessing and reviewing illness related claims, sanction was also given to appoint additional Medical Assessors to fill vacancies which will be due to arise in the near future as a result of retirements. A public competition, administered on behalf of my Department by the Public Appointments Service (PAS), was held in 2012. Fourteen people were placed on the panel that was established following completion of the competitive process.

To date six Medical Assessors have been appointed from this panel, three of whom took up duty in November 2012 and a further three in March of this year. Four of those placed on the panel have subsequently withdrawn from the process. My Department has continued to liaise with the PAS with a view to appointing the four remaining candidates at the earliest opportunity. In this regard, one offer of appointment has been issued, a further two are expected to issue shortly and clearance from the PAS is expected in relation to the last candidate in the coming days.

I place great emphasis on ensuring that all claims are processed and reviewed in a timely manner and I'm very pleased that the Department has been able to fill these critical vacancies and to frontload the appointment of additional Medical Assessors in advance of retirement thereby enabling the Department to deliver a quality service to our customers.

Community Employment Schemes Places

14. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide an update on the introduction of a community employment programme for those who wish to become childcare providers; the number of places that will be available and their locations;

and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18824/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department of Social Protection is improving the provision of training and work experience for CE participants on Community Employment overall. Supports for Childcare Providers are a matter for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and not this Department. Recent developments have focused on CE schemes involved in supporting community childcare services and on CE participants who wish to pursue a career in childcare while on CE. These developments reflect the findings of a number of recent reviews - the “CE Financial Review of Schemes” (2012) and the “Review of Department of Social Protection Employment Support Schemes” (2012). In response, the Department is planning a number of improvements which will provide a clear career progression path and a structure for CE participants in Early Years Services.

Social Welfare Appeals Waiting Times

15. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Social Protection the average waiting time for finalisation of cases in the SWAO; the number of applicants during each of the years between 2008 and 2012 who waited for the finalisation of their case more than three months, between six and eight months, between eight months and twelve months and twelve months or more. [18829/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that the current average times taken to process appeals decided by summary decision is 27.1 weeks and 36.4 weeks for those requiring an oral hearing. These processing times are calculated from the registration date of the appeal to the date of its finalisation. The average processing to process appeals in the years 2008 to 2012 is given in the attached table. These processing times are calculated from the registration date of the appeal to the date of its finalisation. They include all activities during this period including time spent in the Department for comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal put forward by the appellant, and any further investigation, examination or assessment by the Department’s Inspectors and Medical Assessors that is deemed necessary. A considerable period of time is added to the process when an oral hearing is required because of the logistics involved in this process.

Generally the vast majority of cases fall within average processing times but extenuating factors, often outside of the control of the Social Welfare Appeals Office, will cause greater delays in some cases. By its nature and because it is a quasi-judicial nature, the processing of appeals takes time even at the best of times and reflects the fact that, by definition, the appeal process cannot be a quick one.

Average Processing Time of Appeals 2008-2012

Year	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearing
2008	13.9	32.9
2009	18.2	34.8
2010	27.4	45.6
2011	25.1	52.5
2012	27.8	39.5

Proposed Legislation

16. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Social Protection the date on which she will introduce the Social Welfare and Pensions Bill; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18845/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare and Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2013 will provide for amendments to the social welfare code arising from Budget 2013 and from policy, administrative, operational and control matters. It will also make miscellaneous amendments to the Pensions Act 1990. I intend to publish the Bill in the second half of May.

Social Welfare Eligibility

17. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide figures for the number of persons who have had their unemployment assistance and unemployment benefit cut because her Department was not satisfied that sufficient effort was being made by the people concerned to find employment. [18968/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A jobseeker claim can be disallowed where the customer fails to meet the conditions of the scheme, including the requirement to be available for full-time work and genuinely seeking work. Continued entitlement to payment is also subject to review on an on-going basis and in this context I assume the Deputy is referring to the application of penalty rates to jobseeker claims. Reduced payment rates (penalty rates) for jobseekers were introduced in April 2011 as a means of achieving the engagement of jobseekers with activation measures, including the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP). A penalty of up to €44 per week applies to an individual's jobseeker payment where there is a failure to engage with this process. The total number of penalty rates applied during 2012 was 1,455. From January to March 2013 the number of penalty rates applied was 619.

Child Care Services Provision

18. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on whether a Scandinavian model of childcare could be adapted to an Irish context; her plans to develop same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18974/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Deputy will be aware that I believe the provision of adequate childcare is essential to support parents and especially those parenting alone to take up employment. Employment offers the best protection for those at risk of poverty and this is especially the case for families with children. The model of child care which is available in Scandanavia is a very comprehensive model although it is also very expensive. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (D/CYA) estimates that the cost of universal child care provision in Ireland could reach around €1 billion per annum. In light of the current fiscal environment, this level of funding is not available. In December I announced, along with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs a new pilot afterschool childcare scheme which will be funded from the transfer of savings from my Department as part of the Budget. The scheme will provide 6,000 places on an annual basis and will cost €14m. The first phase of this pilot scheme for the provision of after school childcare places will begin on 29 April. Up to 500 childcare places will be available to people who have been long term unemployed or were former recipients of the One Parent Family Payment and who have got a job offer or have significantly increased their part time work.

The rate of subsidy for the scheme is €35 per week rate of subvention and a parental contribution of €20 per week per child. During school holidays the subvention rate will increase to €100 per week but the parental contribution will remain at €20 per week. In this phase the scheme will be made available in seven locations and can be applied for through seven local offices of the Department of Social Protection Finglas, Dundalk, Tralee, King's Inn Street, Cork city, Mullingar and Limerick city (Dominic Street). Customers who meet the criteria will get a letter of eligibility so that they can apply to the local childcare committee for a place. The new scheme will incentivise and support people who are long term unemployed to avail of an employment opportunity by providing them with increased access to subsidised after-school child care. The scheme will build on the existing supports provided for, and implemented by, the D/CYA in the child care sector, including the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) and the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) schemes, through which child care is provided to some 40,000 children of low-income parents at reduced rates.

Social Welfare Rates

19. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent to which she expects to be in a position to meet the budgetary requirements of her Department without the imposition of extra curtailments in respect of payments to social welfare recipients such as job seekers, old age pensioners and those in receipt of child or adult dependent allowances and/or disability related payments; if she has identified the extent to which she can comply with the Troika requirements entered into by her predecessor in the coming year and thereafter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18932/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Estimates for the Department of Social Protection as published in the 2013 Revised Estimates (REV) provides for expenditure of €20.243 billion on schemes, services and administration in 2013. The Estimates are based, in the main, on an analysis of trends as regards likely numbers of recipients and average value of payments in 2013. Actual trends on individual schemes are being closely monitored on an on-going basis. Decisions about the adequacy of resources available to the Department will be taken in the overall budgetary context.

As the Deputy will be aware Ireland is in the final year of the EU-IMF Programme of Financial Support. The references to financial targets in the agreement relate to the overall fiscal consolidation, not to Departmental or sectoral budgets. The Troika recognise the scale of this spending on social protection and have emphasised the importance of reform in this area both as a contribution to fiscal consolidation and to facilitate economic recovery. They have not however identified any specific programmes that should be curtailed or discontinued in their view, nor have they specified any savings or expenditure targets in the social protection area. Although the Troika may identify areas of expenditure which they believe merit examination, any changes to the schemes operated by the Department are decided by Cabinet, subject to the approval of the Oireachtas, in the context of the on-going review of expenditure generally and in the context of deciding the fiscal consolidation measures to be included in Budget 2014.

In relation to Budget 2014, the Deputy will be aware that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Expenditure Report 2013 published by Government last December provides for additional new expenditure reduction measures of €440 million to be achieved in 2014 in the Department of Social Protection budget. Reducing overall expenditure in 2014 in line with this target will be very challenging. No decisions have been made at this stage as to how these targets will be met.

Rural Social Scheme Applications

20. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will outline the maximum duration that a participant can stay in rural social scheme employment; her views on situations that have now developed whereby participants are on such schemes indefinitely; the steps she will take to ensure that there will be a turnover of participants to prevent the exclusion of certain applicants due to incumbents now having almost permanent status on such schemes [18692/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The rural social scheme provides income support for farmers and those engaged in fishing who have an entitlement to specified social welfare payments. Participation on the scheme is not intended to open ended and entitlement to an underlying social welfare payment must be proven annually to ensure continuation on the scheme. Given the nature of the scheme and its focus on addressing community needs as well as providing income support, as opposed to an activation or training scheme, the same requirements in respect of limiting duration are not considered to have the same relevance. The scheme currently provides work opportunities for around 2,600 participants and 130 supervisory staff. A wide consultation process with stakeholders and participants will be required in order to discuss any proposal for change.

National Internship Scheme Placements

21. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection the date on which she will publish the evaluation report on the JobBridge scheme. [18827/13]

27. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to ensure that a host organisation benefiting from free labour through the JobBridge scheme makes a financial contribution to the weekly payments made to participants; the date on which these payments will begin and the value of these payments. [18828/13]

30. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Social Protection following the Indecon Report into the JobsBridge scheme which revealed that 240 of the 7,300 companies surveyed admitted to availing of the scheme to displace paid jobs, the reason that only 12 companies have since been banned from participating in the scheme. [18969/13]

31. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons who have participated in the JobBridge scheme in the private sector; the number of those persons who remained in employment within the company in which they completed a JobBridge internship. [18826/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 21, 27, 30 and 31 together.

Since it commenced on 1st July, 2011, Jobbridge has made good progress. As at 18 April, 2013, 16,545 jobseekers had commenced internships since the scheme was launched. Currently there are c 6,000 people on internships with c 2,500 internships opportunities available to be filled. In order to assess the impact of the scheme the Department commissioned Indecon economic consultants to complete an independent evaluation based on an analysis of Departmental data and surveys and interviews with host organisations and interns. I expect to publish the final report from Indecon in May.

Indecon's interim report, published last year, found that 61% of interns secured employment

either with their host organisation or another employer within 5 months of finishing an internship. These progression rates compare very favourably with similar schemes across Europe. The evaluation study also found that 67% of internships were with private sector host organisations. The participation of large numbers of private sector host organisations is making a significant contribution to the quality of experience for interns and in improving their chances in entering the workforce.

Of those individuals who undertook their internships in private sector host organisations, 54.1% were in employment at the time of the research (this includes interns who had just completed their internship) of whom 30.2% were in employment with their host organization. This indicates that c one third of interns progress from an internship into direct employment with the host organisation. The issue of host organisations making a financial contribution to the weekly top-up payment to interns is under review in my Department. However any change to existing arrangements will need careful consideration as one of the advantages of the existing scheme is that it is simple to understand and administer for interns, host organisations and the Department.

With regard to the issue of displacement the Department has taken all reasonable steps to minimise displacement of existing paid employment by internships. The terms of the scheme prohibit the use of internships to displace existing employees, there are limits on the number of internships a host organisation can offer (no more than 10% of the workforce at a particular location), host organisations are not permitted to 'roll-over' internships by replacing one intern with another at the end of the internship, and all applications from host organisations are screened to minimise the possibility of displacement. Nevertheless displacement may be subtle and it is impossible to eliminate it completely.

The Department's own control measures are based on a combination of randomised monitoring visits/inspections with host organisations and on investigation of complaints received from interns. As of 18th April, 2013, 15 host organisations have been excluded from further participation in JobBridge as a consequence of these control activities.

Child Benefit Rates

22. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans for the future of child benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18958/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Child benefit is a universal payment that assists parents with the cost of raising children and it contributes towards alleviating child poverty. The estimated expenditure on child benefit in 2013 is around €1.9 billion and it is currently paid to around 611,000 families in respect of some 1.16 million children. The social protection system also provides assistance to low income families with children through the payment of qualified child increases on primary social welfare payments and through the family income supplement payment. Both of these provide a level of assistance which is directly or indirectly linked with a household's income situation. The social protection system also provides assistance to low income families with children through the payment of qualified child increases on primary social welfare payments and through the family income supplement payment. Both of these provide a level of assistance which is directly or indirectly linked with a household's income situation.

Achieving a better design of the overall system of child income supports, including child benefit, raises complex issues about the effectiveness and the efficiency of the full range of income supports currently provided to families and their children. In this context and in line with a commitment in the Programme for Government I established an Advisory Group on Tax and

Social Welfare, which has been tasked with recommending cost-effective solutions as to how employment disincentives can be improved and better poverty outcomes can be achieved, particularly child poverty outcomes. The Advisory Group prioritised the area of family and child income supports and its report on this issue was published in February.

This report makes important recommendations on how child benefit could be maintained as a universal payment while reforming the current system of child and family income supports so as to better target those who need these supports most. The Group concluded that there is no one perfect method of targeting child and family income supports. While some members of the Advisory Group found that taxation of child benefit is an attractive reform option, it was recognised that this approach, being limited to only one child and family income support payment, does not contribute to a better overall design of the child and family income support system. For this and other reasons, there was a strong preference in the Group for another approach based on a two-tier child and family income support payment. The Group considered that this approach would allow for a rationalisation of the overall child income support system while minimising work disincentives and allow for better flexibility in the targeting of support for different household types.

Given the range of complex issues involved, including fiscal, operational and legal considerations, as well as the implications for reforms in terms of child poverty and employment incentive outcomes, the Government has made no decision at this time on the core recommendations of the report. It is the Government's intention that the report will now contribute to the policy debate on the matter. In considering the proposals to reform the structure of child and family income support payments, including the balance between income supports and services, such as childcare, I expect that Government will also take into account further work by the Advisory Group on the issue of social protection and taxation supports for working age persons and more general developments in the budgetary and fiscal situation.

Departmental Reports

23. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 92 of 5 March 2013, the date on which the social impact assessment of the taxation and welfare changes announced in Budget 2013 was completed; the date on which it will be published; the number of persons within her Department who were tasked to complete this work and their positions within her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18840/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): My department published the Social Impact Assessment of Budget 2013 on 28 March 2013. The assessment covers the main welfare and direct tax measures in Budget 2013, which generated savings/revenue of almost €1 billion. Social impact assessment is an evidence-based methodology which uses a tax/welfare simulation model developed by the Economic and Social Research Institute to estimate the likely distributive effects of budgetary measures on income and social inequalities. Four departmental staff contributed to the preparation of the assessment. Technical assistance on the use of the Switch model was provided by the Economic and Social Research Institute. Responsibility for the assessment rests solely with my department. Four departmental staff contributed to the preparation of the assessment. Technical assistance on the use of the Switch model was provided by the Economic and Social Research Institute. Responsibility for the assessment rests solely with my department. I hope that the publication of the assessment will inform public discourse and contribute to the policy making process for Budget 2014.

Parliamentary Questions Numbers

24. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she has instructed staff in her Department to routinely request the withdrawal of Parliamentary Questions before they are officially responded to; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18696/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The practice of withdrawing Parliamentary Questions (PQs) has been in place for over 20 years and has assisted the Department to cope with the large volume of PQs it receives annually. The Department provides the Deputy with the relevant information in relation to the individual query and in a majority of cases subsequently confirms this information in writing. In general, Deputies find this service helpful as they can often receive the written response quicker than the formal PQ reply. The Department has also set up dedicated enquiry telephone lines and specific email addresses for each section in the Department specifically for the purpose of dealing with queries from members of the Oireachtas in relation to individual cases/claims.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

25. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social Protection the steps she is taking to allow self employed persons who are seeking work but ineligible for a social assistance payment to be eligible for schemes or employment when being on the live register is a requirement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18904/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Given the scale of the unemployment crisis, the key objective of activation policy and labour market initiatives is to offer assistance to those in need of support in securing work and achieving financial self-sufficiency. This policy objective prioritises scarce resources to those in receipt of qualifying welfare payments. Accordingly the employment services and schemes provided by the Department are focused, in the first instance, on this cohort of unemployed people. It is recognised, however, that not all unemployed people (including those previously self-employed) are dependent on the State for financial support and some services (for example assistance with jobsearch activities, use of online job search tools) are available to such people if they register with the Department's employment services offices.

It should also be noted that the State is funding over 450,000 in further education, higher education and training, namely:

- 75,000 FÁS training places.
- 180,000 Further Education places, 162,000 of which are full-time Higher Education places provided in Universities and Institutes of Technology across the country.
- Over 40,000 training places through Skillnets, including 8,000 for the unemployed, in partnership with private employers.
- The Momentum initiative provides free education and training projects for up to 6,500 long-term unemployed jobseekers.
- Over 6,000 Springboard, free part-time higher education, places in 2012, with additional places to be announced for this year.

Eligibility for accessing many of these interventions is not contingent on receipt of a social welfare payment or signing for credited contributions. Extension of the initiative to those not

associated with the Live Register is not being considered given the current size and construct of the Live Register, in particular the numbers of people who are now long-term unemployed.

Youth Guarantee

26. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress she has made on implementing a youth guarantee scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18946/13]

48. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Social Protection the details of her implementation plan of the Youth Guarantee; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18841/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 26 and 48 together.

The EU Council Recommendation on a Youth Guarantee received political agreement at the EPSCO Council meeting on February 28th. Following some small changes required by the Council’s Jurist/Linguists, it is anticipated that the final text will be formally adopted by the Council this month. The Recommendation is that Member States should: Ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

While it is recommended that the guarantee should be implemented as soon as possible, it is recognised that implementation will be more gradual in the Member States experiencing the most severe budgetary difficulties and higher rates of youth unemployment. The government will now review the current range of youth employment policies in Ireland to assess what measures will need to be taken to commence the gradual implementation of the guarantee. This will include the identification of what would be the appropriate timescale for implementation in Ireland’s current employment and budgetary circumstances.

In this context, the Government intends to work with all relevant stakeholders to maximise the impact of a youth guarantee in Ireland. We have sought funding from the European Commission for a the proposed pilot Youth Guarantee project in the Ballymun area of north Dublin, and numerous organisations (e.g. IBEC, Ballymun Job Centre, National Youth Council of Ireland) have agreed to participate in this pilot.

The scale and nature of any additional measures required for the gradual implementation of a guarantee at national level will depend on the trend in youth unemployment, and in particular the number of young people likely to experience periods of unemployment of more than four months under current policies. In this context, it is a welcome development that the official labour market figures published by the CSO recently indicated that the number of young unemployed at the end of 2012, at 59,000, a reduction of almost 9,000 on the same time a year earlier. It is to be hoped that this is the beginning of a sustained downward movement in youth unemployment as the economy recovers. Even so, the implementation of a guarantee will, almost certainly, require an expansion in the range of opportunities currently on offer to young people in the form of further education and training, internships, subsidised private-sector recruitment, and supports for self-employment.

In this regard the State already provides a significant number of initiatives which are of relevance to young people and the Department of Social Protection took steps in Budget 2013 to increase funding and places for schemes such as JobBridge, Community Employment, TÚS

and a new state employment scheme in the local Government sector. In total an additional 10,000 places will be provided. Other relevant provision is made through the training and education programmes delivered through FÁS and the further education sector. The size and the timescale for any additional provision that is both desirable and feasible, over and above that outlined above, will be established over the coming months.

Question No. 27 answered with Question No. 21.

Social Welfare Code

28. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will use the opportunity of the Social Welfare and Pensions Bill later this year to provide for the reimbursement to her Department by insurance companies of social welfare payments deducted from awards of special damages in respect of loss of earnings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18931/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): As the Deputy will be aware, the Department has undertaken a substantial amount of background work on this matter including direct engagement with the Personal Injuries Assessment Board and the State Claims agency as well as extensive discussions with counterparts in Northern Ireland where such a system of reimbursement is in operation. As part of this work, the Department will engage in consultations with relevant stakeholders in order to adequately assess all of the possible implications and to comply with formal Regulatory Impact Assessment requirements.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

29. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her Department will take property tax rates into considerations when means testing income to determine if an individual is eligible for jobseeker's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18693/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Jobseeker's allowance is a means tested social assistance scheme operated by my Department. For means test purposes, account is taken of the income and assets of both the claimant and his or her spouse/partner including the earnings of the spouse. Where a jobseeker's allowance claimant or their spouse is paying the local property tax, their means for social welfare purposes are their means before they make this payment i.e. no account is taken of such payments in the means assessment. Where a jobseeker's allowance claimant or their spouse is paying the local property tax, their means for social welfare purposes are their means before they make this payment i.e. no account is taken of such payments in the means assessment. Any changes to the arrangements outlined above would have to be considered in the context of the on-going review of all Government expenditure and Budget 2014.

Questions Nos. 30 and 31 answered with Question No. 21.

Social Welfare Benefits Waiting Times

32. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will state for

each payment issued by the schemes administered by her Department the processing time that it is currently taking to process these from the date of application to the final decision to award payment ; if she will provide a further breakdown for each payment stating the time taken for the initial process to record the application on the system, the time taken to process a means test if applicable, the time to process a habitual residence check if applicable, the time to process the medical examination if applicable, the time taken to process all other checks for each payment; the steps she has taken to reduce these processing times; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18702/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department is committed to ensuring that claims are processed as expeditiously as possible. The Table below provides details of processing times for each of the Department's schemes in March 2013. A further breakdown of the time taken for the individual steps in the processing of claims is not available. All claims are registered promptly, in some schemes this is done through the scanning of claim documents onto the system while in other schemes this involves an officer inputting data. The time taken to perform means tests and/or medical examinations where these are required is not measured separately, while a determination on habitual residence where required is an integral part of the decision making process.

Processing times vary across schemes, depending on the differing qualification criteria. As can be seen from the data in the table below, schemes that require a high level of documentary evidence from the customer, particularly in the case of illness-related schemes, can take longer to process. Similarly, means-tested payments can also require more detailed investigation and interaction with the applicant, thereby lengthening the decision making process. Delays can also arise if information is required from social security organisations in other jurisdictions and where additional information has been requested from the applicant but remains outstanding. Work on clearing backlogs in some scheme areas, such as carers allowance and invalidity pension has temporarily distorted the time taken to clear claims due to the high level of reviews and appeals following backlog clearances, but the progress made will be reflected in processing times in the coming months. Both schemes are up to date with the processing of new applications, as is family income supplement for both new and renewal applications.

As part of the Department's programme of service delivery modernisation, a range of initiatives aimed at streamlining the processing of claims, supported by modern technology, have been implemented in recent years. Operational processes, procedures and the organisation of work are continually reviewed to ensure that processing capability is maximised. In addition, the staffing needs of the Department are regularly reviewed, having regard to workloads and the competing demands arising, to ensure that the best use is made of all available resources.

The new Intreo service is currently being rolled-out and implemented on a phased basis. This new service integrates employment and income supports and provides for a streamlined and personalized service to clients in accessing job opportunities and availing of supports to enable them to get back to work at the earliest possible opportunity. The Intreo Centres also include a single integrated decision-making team that integrate and streamline the processes formerly undertaken by the different agencies now amalgamated into the Department. The benefits of the integrated decisions process are already visible in terms of shorter decision times and in the reduced recourse to supplementary payments in offices where integrated decisions are in operation.

I wish to assure the Deputies that prompt processing of claims remains a priority for me. Each scheme area is continuously monitored and processing procedures reviewed to ensure that claims are paid to customer as quickly as possible.

Table: Claim processing times - March 2013

Scheme	Average weeks to award
State Pension (contributory)	4
State Pension (transition)	6
State pension (non-contributory)	14
Widow(er)'s Pension (contributory)	2
Widow(er)'s Pension (non-con) pension & one parent family payment (widow)	6
One Parent Family	13
Household Benefits	2
Bereavement Grant	1
Invalidity Pension	60 (claims received in the last 6 months are decided within 8 weeks. Appeals and reviews from backlog clearance are pushing out the average)
Family Income Supplement - New Claims	14 (new and renewal claims are now processed within 2 weeks of receipt)
Disability Allowance	23
Carer's Benefit	9
Carer's Allowance	34 (claims received in the last 6 months are decided within 13 weeks. Appeals and reviews from backlog clearance are pushing out the average)
Jobseeker's Benefit	2
Jobseeker's Allowance	4
Illness Benefit	1
Maternity Benefit	2
Child Benefit - Domestic	3
Domiciliary Care Allowance	7
Back to Education Allowance	Applicants for BTEA are already in receipt of another social welfare payment before a decision is made on their entitlement to the Allowance.

National Internship Scheme Administration

33. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the situation in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council owned Ballyogan Recycling Depot, at which a number of persons have been taken on to the JobsBridge scheme which has resulted in other workers being displaced [18808/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department is in receipt of a complaint regarding the issue raised by the Deputy and is currently examining the matter. All allegations are taken extremely seriously; displacement of existing workers by JobBridge interns is not allowed under the terms and conditions of the JobBridge scheme, is a flagrant abuse of the scheme and is not a practice that can be condoned in any circumstances. Any host organisation which is found to be displacing paid staff in contravention of the scheme rules will be disbarred from further access to the scheme. In addition, all existing internships with that

host organisation will cease with immediate effect. I understand that the facility referred to in the question is operated by a private firm operating under contract with the local authority. The complaint made is currently being investigated by the Department and I am advised that an investigating officer has been in contact with both the individual who raised the complaint and with the host organisation. I expect a report on the matter to be finalised shortly.

The whole purpose of Jobbridge is to encourage job creation and to incentivise employers to offer opportunities to unemployed people. It runs counter to the logic of the scheme that it should be used to displace existing employees onto the live register and I will not tolerate such behaviour. In fact the scheme has been designed and is operated with a number of controls designed to minimise the risk of such behaviour. Specifically:

- The host organisation may not provide an internship opportunity under the Scheme to an individual with whom they have an existing employment relationship

- The host organisation cannot advertise internships if they have paid employment vacancies in the area of activity in which the internship is offered.

- The total number of internships which may be availed of by a host organisation is limited to 1 in 10 of their workforce or, in the case of very large employers, an absolute limit of 200 staff.

- Organisations must abide by a six-month cooling-off period between internships; in other words an organisation cannot 'roll-over' internships on a continuous basis. This limits the ability of an internship to substitute for a permanent role.

- The host organisation must commit to provide coaching and mentoring to the interns and to complete monthly compliance returns to the Department of Social Protection

- All applications from host organisations to advertise internships are reviewed and assessed against these criteria by the Department's National Contact Centre in Edenderry.

- The Department of Social Protection proactively monitors internships on an ongoing basis. This involves the regular review of monthly compliance reports and the conduct of random monitoring site inspections. Since Jobbridge was launched 1,712 monitoring visits have been conducted.

- All complaints received from interns or members of the public are investigated. In addition to the regular monitoring regime, 275 complaints have warranted investigation since the Scheme commenced.

- To date 15 host organisations found to have breached the scheme criteria have been excluded from further participation in the Scheme.

I am satisfied that the design of the scheme together with the intensive monitoring regime operated by the Department minimises the level of displacement and acts to protect the interests of host organisations, interns and the wider labour market.

Departmental Staff Data

34. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of unfilled positions within her Department and their titles; and the dates on which she expects to fill these positions. [18838/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department's Employment Control Framework (ECF) figure, set by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), for the total number of full time equivalent posts was set at 6,610 for 2012 is now set at 6,377 for 2013, which requires the Department to reduce the number of posts by 233 this year. The Department's salary budget for 2013 has been reconfigured to take account of this reduced ECF. In the light of the revised ECF the Department is currently examining ways in which it can restructure its business in order to achieve its reduced staffing numbers. On that basis, only posts that are absolutely critical will be considered as to whether they can be filled. Therefore, at any given time, vacancies within my Department may change, with staff being reassigned or transferred to fill a critical post. It is not possible to provide a definitive number of unfilled positions, or to provide a timeframe as to when and if positions can be filled.

Staff redeployment is handled in such a manner as to ensure that the Department continues to meet its functions and serves its customer's needs in an efficient and timely manner. The Department continues to meet its targets as efficiently as possible within available resources. In this regard, each week, nearly 1.5 million people receive a social welfare payment and, when qualified adults and children are included, almost 2.3 million people benefit from weekly payments. Some 600,000 families receive child benefit payments in respect of over 1.2 million children each month. In 2012 the activities of the Department included: 2 million applications processed; 87 million scheme payments made; more than 1 million control reviews; million telephone calls answered; 32,558 social welfare appeals finalised; 95,000 job opportunities advertised and; over 154,000 PPS numbers allocated to clients from more than 180 countries.

Departmental Properties

35. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number and locations through which her Department operates; the amount being paid in rent for each unit for each of the past three years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18846/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department delivers its services from approximately 970 locations throughout the country. A database which provides the locations of these offices is available on request. The payment of rent in respect of each unit is a matter for the Commissioners of Public Works who have responsibility for the provision of the Department's accommodation. In addition to the premises provided by the Commissioners of Public Works, the Department pays rent to the HSE and FAS in respect of premises accommodating staff now transferred to the Department of Social Protection. In 2012, the Department of Social Protection paid the HSE and FAS a combined total of €2.089 million in respect of 750 of the total 970 locations.

Redundancy Payments

36. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 110 of 5 March 2013, in which she stated that a person must be employed for 104 weeks before they have a reasonable attachment to employment in order to receive a redundancy payment, her plans regarding a potential reduction in this criteria; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18833/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The purpose of the redundancy payments scheme is to compensate workers, under the Redundancy Payments Acts, for the loss of their jobs by reason of redundancy. Under the scheme, an eligible employee is entitled to two weeks' pay for every year of service, plus a bonus week, subject to a gross weekly salary ceiling of €600.

It is the employer's responsibility to pay statutory redundancy payments in the first instance. Where an employer can prove to the satisfaction of the Department that it is unable to pay statutory redundancy to its eligible employees the Department will make lump sum payments directly to those employees. Such payments raise a debt against the employer which the Department seeks to recover. Lump sum payments made by the Department are paid from the Social Insurance Fund.

In order to be eligible for a statutory redundancy payment, an employee must: be in employment which is insurable under the Social Welfare Acts; be over the age of 16; and have been made redundant as a result of a genuine redundancy situation meaning that the job no longer exists and he/she is not replaced. In addition, the employee must have at least 104 weeks continuous service, with the employer who is making the statutory redundancy payment. This ensures that the employee has had a reasonable attachment to that employer. I have no plans to change this requirement.

Gender Recognition

37. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the date on which she will introduce gender recognition legislation. [18834/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Gender Recognition Advisory Group (GRAG) was established in 2010 to advise the Government on the legislation required to give legal recognition to the acquired gender of transgender persons. The Group engaged in a public consultation exercise which provided organisations and individuals with the opportunity to contribute their comments and proposals.

The Report of the Group, which recommended a scheme for the legal recognition of transgender persons, was approved by the Government on 12 July 2011, and was subsequently published on 14 July 2011. Since the publication of the Report, the Department has been working on developing draft Heads of a Gender Recognition Bill. In this context, it has engaged in discussions with the relevant medical health professionals and with representatives from interested NGOs. Given the legal complexities involved in relation to some of the GRAG recommendations relating to the marital and civil partnership status of individuals, in March 2012 the Department sought advice from the Office of the Attorney General, which in turn sought the legal opinion of external counsel on these issues.

The formal opinion of the Attorney General was received in December 2012 and is currently under consideration by officials in this Department with a view to progressing the draft Heads of the Bill. There are a range of complex and sensitive issues involved in this proposed legislation to give legal recognition to the acquired gender of transgender persons. I have requested the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection to consider the provisional draft Heads of Bill once they are completed. I feel that the committee can make a very positive contribution to the preparation of the legislation and I hope that my officials' appearance before the committee can be scheduled before the summer. I believe this approach should greatly assist the drafting of the legislation and its progress through the Oireachtas. When the Oireachtas committee has discussed the provisional draft heads of Bill I will be in a better position to give a timeframe for the introduction of the legislation.

Anti-Poverty Strategy

38. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide an update on the implementation of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18847/13]

40. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress that has been made on the Programme for Government objective of eliminating poverty; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18964/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 38 and 40 together.

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 (NAPinclusion) identifies a wide range of targeted actions and interventions to achieve the overall objective of reducing consistent poverty. The Department published its third periodic report on progress in implementing NAPinclusion for the two year period 2009-2010 in July 2012 and is in the process of completing a further progress update for January 2011 to December 2012. The Department also convened the Social Inclusion Forum in March 2013 so as to enable us to get the views of all stakeholders on progress with the NAPinclusion. A report on the Forum will be completed in due course. The Department published its third periodic report on progress in implementing NAPinclusion for the two year period 2009-2010 in July 2012 and is in the process of completing a further progress update for January 2011 to December 2012. The Department also convened the Social Inclusion Forum in March 2013 so as to enable us to get the views of all stakeholders on progress with the NAPinclusion. A report on the Forum will be completed in due course.

Following a comprehensive review in 2012, the Government revised the national social target for poverty reduction. The revised target is to reduce consistent poverty to 4 per cent by 2016 (interim target) and to 2 per cent or less by 2020, from the 2010 baseline rate of 6.2 per cent. Ireland's revised contribution to the EU poverty target is to lift a minimum of 200,000 people out of the population in 'combined poverty' between 2012 and 2020. In addition, the Government has agreed to set new sub-targets for children and jobless households and to strengthen the implementation of the target through annual monitoring and social impact assessment.

The Department recently published, for the first time, a "Social Inclusion Monitor" using the latest data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to report on progress towards the national social target for poverty reduction. In 2011, the consistent poverty rate was 6.9 per cent, which according to the CSO 'is not a statistically significant change on the 2010 figure of 6.3 per cent'. The consistent poverty trend in the first year of monitoring the new target reflects the severity of the economic crisis but also demonstrates the effectiveness of policy given the strong performance of social transfers in protecting those on the lowest incomes. In 2011, social transfers (excluding pensions) reduced the at-risk-of poverty rate from 40 per cent to 16 per cent, representing a poverty reduction effect of 60 per cent (rising to 68 per cent if pensions are included).

The Deputies will appreciate that it is too early to draw firm conclusions on the extent to which poverty can be reduced over the coming years. However, the Government expects that effective and targeted policies across all Government programmes and Department - coupled with improvement in the underlying economy and labour and boosted by the commitment of the social partners and civil society - will yield future dividends on reaching the national social target for poverty reduction in the years up to 2020.

Redundancy Payments

39. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the date on which her Department's website will reinstate the practice of showing a statistical breakdown of redundancy figures based on industry, county and gender. [18832/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): At present, the Department is not

in a position to provide a breakdown of the redundancy statistics by county, sector or gender. Work on the reporting facility of the redundancy payments system is ongoing. It is hoped that it will be possible to provide these types of data in the near future but I am not in a position to specify a date for this to happen. The Department will communicate with the Deputy when these are available. Information on the overall number of redundancy applications received by the Department is available on the Department's website www.welfare.ie.

Question No. 40 answered with Question No. 38.

Community Employment Schemes Places

41. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details on the operation of the proposed local authority community employment scheme; if she will provide the timetable for its roll out; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18839/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Government, as part of the Budget package for 2013, announced a number of initiatives focused on providing work opportunities for those currently unemployed. One element of this package is the development of a new initiative with local authorities to provide 3,000 work opportunities in 2013. This is in line with the commitments set out in the Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work. Details of the design of the initiative and the nature of work to be undertaken in each local authority area is advancing with a number of local authorities likely to be able to being the roll-out of the scheme in the coming weeks. The range of work to be undertaken and consultation with local stakeholders, including staff representatives of the local authority, is primarily a matter for each local authority.

Social Welfare Offices

42. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will outline her discussions in relation to the Office of Public Works and the advancing of her commitment to open a social welfare office in the Lucan area of County Dublin; if her attention has been drawn to the recent visit by the Minister of State at the Department of Finance with responsibility for the Office of Public Works to a location in Lucan; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18698/13]

53. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to develop a one stop shop for social welfare recipients in the Clondalkin, Palmerstown and Lucan areas of County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18699/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 42 and 53 together.

The Department is committed to providing new Intreo Centres in these areas. The Office of Public Works (OPW) is responsible for providing the Department with its office accommodation requirements and my officials currently meet with officials of that office on a fortnightly basis to discuss progress on delivery across the country. I understand, in this regard, that a possible property solution has been identified for Clondalkin and is currently under negotiation.

In the week beginning 11 March 2013, the OPW placed advertisements in national newspapers seeking expressions of interest from landlords and developers in providing suitable accommodation that could serve the Lucan- Adamstown area. However, no responses were received. The OPW continues to explore all options including engaging with other bodies in order to

provide a satisfactory solution. I am not aware of any visit by the Minister of State at the Department of Finance with responsibility for the OPW to a location in Lucan.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

43. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Social Protection with regards to young homeless persons on the half rate social welfare payment who are trapped in emergency accommodation if she will consider proposals that will allow these young persons to access a full payment in order that they may find secure accommodation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18806/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The €100 rate of jobseeker's allowance was introduced for claimants aged under 20 in April 2009, and this rate was applied to claimants aged up to 21 from December 2009. A rate of €144 applies to claimants aged 22-24. The measures encourage young jobseekers to improve their skills and remain active in the labour market in order to avoid the risk of becoming long-term unemployed and will help them to progress into sustainable employment on a long-term basis. Where a person is in receipt of a rate of jobseeker's allowance described above and he or she participates in a course of education, training, Community Employment, Rural Social Scheme or Tús, a higher rate of €160 applies. I understand that the Deputy has been contacted with regard to these measures by Focus Ireland. My officials are in contact with Focus Ireland in relation to their concerns. While the primary issue in this regard is a housing issue rather than one of income support, my Department will continue to engage with Focus Ireland and to seek a viable solution.

Exceptional Needs Payments

44. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection the average payment made under the exceptional needs payment scheme during each of the first three months of 2013. [18825/13]

52. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide figures for the amount of money allocated to community welfare officers for emergency payments of utility bills such as gas, electricity, heating oil and so on in each year for the past three years; her views on any increases in demands upon CWOs for such emergency payments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18697/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 44 and 52 together.

Under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off and unforeseen expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income. The Government has provided €47.6 million for the scheme in 2013. ENPs are payable at the discretion of the officers administering the scheme taking into account the requirements of the legislation and all the relevant circumstances of the case in order to ensure that the payments target those most in need of assistance. There is no automatic entitlement to a payment or predetermined amounts under the different categories of ENPs.

The average ENP payment made during each of the first three months of 2013 is outlined in the attached tabular statement. Statistics on ENP expenditure in respect of utility bills and heating costs for the years 2010 to 2012 show a reduction in the amounts paid, details of which are also provided.

Average ENPs 2013:

Month	January	February	March
Average ENP Amount	€265	€263	€268

ENPs for Utility and Heating payments 2010 – 2012:

Category	2010	2011	2012
ESB	€2.0m	€2.0m	€1.8m
GAS	€0.9m	€0.6m	€0.4m
HEATING	€1.5m	€1.3m	€1.1m

Social Welfare Code

45. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the Court of Justice of the EU, in the case of *Servet Kamberaj v Servet Kamberaj v Istituto per l'Edilizia Sociale della Provincia autonoma di Bolzano IPES*, that EU member states are prohibited from implementing legislation which treats third-country nationals who are long-term residents different from EU citizens in relation to the allocation of certain types of social welfare payments; if she has examined the implications of this judgment for her Department; and if she will provide details of any discussions she has had on it. [18836/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There do not appear to be any implications for my Department from the Judgement of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in the case of *Servet Kamberaj v Istituto per l'Edilizia Sociale della Provincia autonoma di Bolzano (IPES)*. My Department does not treat third-country nationals who are long-term legal residents any differently to Irish, EU or EEA citizens in relation to the allocation of certain types of social welfare payments. The Directive which is mentioned extensively in the Judgement and which governs the status and treatment of third-country nationals who are long-term residents in the European Union is Directive 2003/109/EC. Recital 25 in the preamble to that Directive states: "In accordance with Articles 1 and 2 of the Protocol on the position of the United Kingdom and Ireland, annexed to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and without prejudice to Article 4 of the said Protocol, these Member States are not participating in the adoption of this Directive and are not bound by or subject to its application".

Social Welfare Appeals Administration

46. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the fact that in 2011, almost one in five decisions in social welfare appeals was overturned by getting the original deciding officer to revise their original decision; her plans to ensure that there is better first-instance decision-making. [18842/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Decisions on statutory social welfare schemes are made by statutorily appointed Deciding Officers (DO). The DO must satisfy him/herself that the person:

- is aware of all the information that could adversely affect his/her entitlement;
- was given an opportunity to comment and to submit any facts or information to correct

any inaccuracy or incompleteness in the information; and

- any comments made by the person are clearly and fully considered before a decision is made.

DOs and others involved in the process will assist claimants as far as possible in making their applications but, as a matter of law, the burden of providing evidence to support a claim rests with claimants.

Disqualifications and disallowances are issued to the customer in writing. The disallowance/disqualification reasons and grounds are outlined clearly and are sufficient to enable the appellant to lodge an appeal. Persons are advised, in the decision letters, of their right to seek a Department of Social Protection (DSP) review of the initial decision and are also advised as to how to lodge an appeal to the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). Where a review is sought, the DO re-examines the case and, taking account of any new facts or evidence, may revise his/ her decision.

6,035 of the appeals finalised in 2011 were revised decisions made by DOs who reviewed the claim following the initial disallowance. This figure illustrates that the review process is well understood and utilised. Many revised decisions arose as a result of new facts or fresh evidence produced by the claimant after the original decision on his /her claim. In such cases an Appeals Officer decision was not necessary and obviated the need for claimants to go through the full appeals process. DOs are reminded through on-going training, guidelines and circulars of the rules of natural justice and the submissions and decisions process of the SWAO. Furthermore the Department constantly monitors the decision making process and implements any changes required to ensure a high standard of decision making is maintained.

The Department processes in excess of two million claims each year and it makes payments to over one million people every week. It is important to emphasise that the staff in this Department are very conscious of their obligations to claimants and every effort is made to ensure people receive the entitlements due to them.

Question No. 47 answered with Question No. 12.

Question No. 48 answered with Question No. 26.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

49. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide clarification on the situation concerning those mothers working in the home and their ability to receive a token social welfare payment which would allow them to access community employment schemes and other training in preparation of returning to full-time work; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18844/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The core eligibility criterion for CE is that the person is in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment, as defined on the Department's website. This requirement is based on Government policy and Departmental guidelines and has been the rule since CE commenced in 1994. At present persons signing for credits or otherwise ineligible for a social welfare payment, do not meet the current eligibility requirements for participation on the CE Scheme. They may, however, be eligible for participation on other programmes, although they may not qualify for payment of an allowance e.g. FÁS training courses. Such persons are advised to contact their local Employment Services Office or Intreo office (where available) where an Employment Services Officer will be happy to discuss

the employment and training options that are open to them. There are no proposals currently under consideration in regard to making changes to the national operation of the Community Employment Programme. Within the current very difficult budgetary constraints, the number of places on Community Employment is being expanded up to 25,300 by the end of 2013.

Departmental Reports

50. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her Department has conducted any research on identifying a minimum essential standard of living; if she will provide the results of this research and the methodology used; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18837/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department has not directly undertaken research on identifying a minimum essential standard of living for households. However, as part of its overall function of research into poverty and social exclusion issues, the Department has indirectly supported research related to this area, namely through a social policy project approved by the Irish Research Council under its Research Development Initiative in 2010. The project titled 'Establishing Minimum Income Standards for Irish Households' was a joint initiative of Trinity College Dublin, Department of Economics and the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice. The latter body has a long-running series of research publications in this area. A report on the study titled 'A Minimum Income Standard for Ireland - A consensual budget standards study examining household types across the lifecycle' was published in 2012 and is available at the following link (http://www.tcd.ie/policy-institute/publications/bluepaper_27.php).

Question No. 51 answered with Question No. 12.

Question No. 52 answered with Question No. 44.

Question No. 53 answered with Question No. 42

Question No. 54 answered with Question No. 9.

Foreign Military Personnel

55. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 201 of 6 March 2013 if permission was sought for US military personnel to wear uniform outside the transit area of Shannon Airport on 10 February 2013; and, if so, if this was granted. [19383/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): In accordance with the provision of Section 317 of the Defence Act, 1954, express permission has been granted to the US authorities for their military personnel to wear military uniform in the transit areas of Irish airports. Enquiries made by the Department have not identified an instance of the wearing of uniform by US military personnel outside the transit area of Shannon Airport on 10 February 2013. However, should the Deputy be in a position to provide further information, my Department will be happy to look further into the matter.

Departmental Expenditure

56. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if any of his Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [19216/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): None of my Department's capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure in 2012.

Departmental Expenditure

57. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide the month by month profile for his Department's 2013 capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19232/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): My Department does not operate any capital investment programmes but has a small administrative capital allocation. This is mostly used to support investment in ongoing renewal of the Department's ICT infrastructure to leverage maximum operating cost-effectiveness with reducing staff resources; necessary replacement of equipment and the development of new software applications for the enhancement of passport and consular services to citizens; and essential maintenance and refurbishment of diplomatic premises abroad. The table below presents the profiled capital expenditure 2013 for both Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs and Trade) and Vote 27 (International Co-operation).

-	Jan €000	Feb €000	Mar €000	April €000	May €000	June €000	July €000	Aug €000	Sept €000	Oct €000	Nov €000	Dec €000	Total €000
V28 - FOR- EIGN AF- FAIRS AND TRADE	62	62	62	305	315	328	315	305	315	1423	1441	1162	6095
V27 - INTER- NA- TION- AL CO- OPER- ATION	0	0	0	50	10	10	30	20	30	10	95	0	255
	62	62	62	355	325	338	345	325	345	1433	1536	1162	6350

Military Aircraft Landings

58. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 56 of 6 March 2013 if he will confirm that the 608 foreign military aircraft that landed at Shannon Airport in 2012 were all unarmed, carrying no arms, ammunition or explosives; if he will also confirm that they did not engage in intelligence gathering, and that the flights in question did not form any part of military exercises or operations; and if this was not the case, if he will clarify the basis upon which the aircraft were permitted to land. [19384/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): As outlined in the response to the Parliamentary Question referred to by the Deputy, the Air Navigation (Foreign Military Aircraft) Order 1952 gives the Minister for Foreign Affairs primary responsibility for the regulation of activity by foreign military aircraft in Ireland. Permission for foreign military aircraft to land at Irish airports is subject to assurances that the conditions

mentioned by the Deputy, namely that the aircraft are unarmed, carry no arms, ammunition or explosives, do not engage in intelligence gathering, and that the flights in question do not form any part of military exercises or operations, are fully met. I have no evidence to suggest that these conditions were not met in relation to any of the 608 foreign military aircraft which landed in Shannon Airport in 2012.

Emigration Data

59. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the statistics available to his Department on the numbers of emigrants from Ireland on a yearly basis in the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19450/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The figures requested by the Deputy in respect of immigration to Britain, America, Canada and Australia from 2003 to 2012 are set out below. These statistics are published by the CSO and can be found on their website. The Deputy should note that the prior to 2007, specific figures for Australia and Canada are not available with both countries included in the “Other Countries” category. For the purposes of these figures, “Other Countries” refers to all countries except, the UK, US and our 26 EU partners.

From 2007, figures for Australia and Oceania are available but Canada remains included in the “Other Countries” category which refers to all countries except, the UK, US, Australia and Oceania and our 26 EU partners.

Estimated Emigration (Thousand) by Year and Country of Destination, 2003-2006

Y/E April	United Kingdom	United States	Other countries
2003	8.6	2.8	11.4
2004	7.1	3.9	10.5
2005	7.9	3.3	12.7
2006	8.8	3.3	15.8

Estimated Emigration (Thousand) by Year and Country of Destination, 2007-2012*

Y/E April	United Kingdom	United States	Australia & Oceania	Other countries
2007	11.1	3.1	13.1	7.7
2008	7.6	2.4	12	9.3
2009	13.2	4.1	13.3	8.9
2010	15.3	2.9	11.7	12.7
2011	20	4.7	15.4	16.4
2012	19	8.6	19.7	15.8

*Figures for 2012 are preliminary.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s Emigrant Support Programme (ESP), provides funding to non-profit organisations and projects to support Irish communities overseas and to facilitate the development of more strategic links between Ireland and the global Irish. Between 2004 and 2012, over €104 million has been provided under the Programme. Details of all grant recipients since 2006 can be found on my Department’s website at <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=298>. The emphasis of the Emigrant Support Programme is on supporting culturally sensitive, front-line welfare services, targeted at the most vulnerable members of our

overseas communities, particularly in Britain and the United States. These services have made a substantive difference to the lives of these communities overseas through reducing homelessness, tackling social isolation, and enabling Irish emigrants to access their local statutory entitlements.

In addition, the ESP has facilitated Government support for a range of community and heritage projects, strategic capital projects and other initiatives aimed at creating practical results-orientated links between Ireland and the global Irish, including those that emerged from the Global Irish Economic Forums.

I am pleased that, despite the difficult financial situation we face, the Government has maintained the 2013 funding for the ESP at €11.59 million, the same level as 2012. The focus in 2013 will be on key front-line welfare and advisory services and on projects aimed at supporting new arrivals. The 2013 grant round closed on 20 February. Applications for 360 projects from 16 countries are currently under review. I expect to be in a position to make announcements in the coming weeks.

Property Taxation Administration

60. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will outline the total costs incurred to date and the total estimated costs that will be incurred in establishing extra facilities to handle queries from members of the public on the new local property tax; if he will provide full details of the contract awarded to a private contractor to handle the volume of calls; if any additional staff have been taken on by the Revenue Commissioners in respect of the administration of the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19169/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the introduction of the Local Property Tax (LPT), which amounts to the largest extension of the self-assessment system in the history of the State, represents a significant administrative challenge for Revenue. As a new service that will have exceptional temporary pressures at particular stages of its initial implementation it is difficult to predict the level of contact that will arise during its introduction and, consequently, the resource required to handle queries from members of the public. The Expenditure Report for 2013, which was published in December last, makes a provision of €25.9m in 2013 for the implementation of LPT. The total cost of LPT to the end of March 2013 is approximately €6.6m.

Revenue considered a number of options for the provision of a phone call service to handle queries from members of the public. Revenue decided to use a mix of existing staff, staff from the redeployment resource panel, temporary Clerical Officers (TCOs) and external resources to deal with Local Property Tax. At the end of March 2013, Revenue had a total of 155 full-time equivalent staff assigned to LPT, comprising 125 permanent and 30 TCOs. The permanent staff resource was filled through the internal redeployment of existing staff and the recruitment of a total of 29 staff from the Public Service Resource panel. Revenue is currently in the process of recruiting an additional 25 TCOs to support the introduction of LPT.

Following an open competitive tendering process, the contract for call services was awarded on the basis that the service provider would

1. Deliver information and assistance to taxpayers having difficulty understanding LPT and completing their returns and making payments.
2. Assist taxpayers to navigate a new online system for filing returns and payments for LPT.
3. Escalate calls to a Revenue call service where taxpayer specific information is required to resolve the call.

4. Make outbound calls to taxpayers with information on their LPT queries where requested by Revenue to do so.
5. Provide telephony infrastructure and supports to allow direct transfer to Revenue.
6. Support services and resources including account management and quality control.

The service is provided on a 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday basis. The service provider has the ability to scale operations up or down in response to call volumes. The service must meet Revenue customer service standards and the industry ISO standards and Revenue has provided training and training material to ensure that the standards are achieved. An Irish language service is provided. The necessary confidentiality and security procedures have been implemented as agreed.

The service commenced on 7 March 2013 and call volumes of 108,100 were handled up to 16 April 2013. Regular operational management, reporting and review meetings were provided for in the contract. Reporting arrangements and quality monitoring arrangements were agreed and are being delivered. The nature of the contract is that the cost will depend on the volume of calls handled. In accordance with the relevant Government decision, the Revenue Commissioners publishes quarterly lists of payments over €20,000 and payments made under this contract will be included in future lists. Revenue has advised that a total €67,000 was spent on external service delivery of call centre services in Q1 2013.

The external service delivery of peak call handling in respect of the LPT provides a flexible, scalable response to an unpredictable demand. It also provides assurance that the introduction of LPT will not adversely affect Revenue's capacity to deliver for the Exchequer in relation to their overall priority of maintaining and improving levels of compliance across the range of taxes and duties.

Property Taxation Administration

61. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of tax assessment form returns for the local property tax on a county basis. [19189/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the relevant deadlines for filing LPT Returns are 7 May for paper filers and 28 May for electronic filers. At the launch of the Commissioners Annual Report this morning, they announced that as of 23 April, 218,903 LPT Returns had been filed. Of these, 133,716 were filed electronically and 85,187 were paper Returns. The Commissioners have confirmed that it is not possible at this time to provide a breakdown of the number of LPT Returns filed on a regional or county basis pending the completion of the bulk processing of the Returns.

Pension Related Deductions

62. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a person (details supplied) in County Louth has high pension related deductions taken from their salary at a very early stage during the year; the reason it is not possible to treat one of their incomes separately from their other income for the purposes of PRD; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19195/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I regret that it was not possible, in the time available, to provide an answer to this question. A response is currently being prepared and this will be forwarded shortly, directly to the Deputy.

Tax Rebates

63. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Finance if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare is due a tax rebate for 2010 and 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19197/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that PAYE Balancing Statement (P21) for 2010 and 2011 issued to the person concerned on 26 March 2013. Based on these statements underpayments of income tax arise in the amount of €99.64 for 2010 and €1.20 for 2011. According to Revenue records no income levy was deducted for 2010. Accordingly no refund is due. With regard to USC, for 2011, all individuals are liable to the USC where gross income exceeds the threshold of €4,004 per annum. The rate of the charge on the first €10,036 is 2%. Full medical card holders are not exempt from USC but the maximum rate of USC on PAYE income for holders of full medical cards is 4%, i.e. the 7% rate does not apply to income over €16,016. According to Revenue records the correct USC was paid by the person concerned for 2011.

Departmental Expenditure

64. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance if any of his Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19215/13]

65. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide the month by month profile for his Department's 2013 capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19231/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 64 and 65 together.

The capital allocation for my Department for 2012 was €0.150m. None of this budget was used for current expenditure. The capital allocation for my Department for 2013 is €0.150m. There is no immediate demand on this allocation and therefore it is profiled for spend in the final quarter of this year.

Tax Rebates

66. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding a tax refund in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19318/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the taxpayer has been issued with a form P50 to enable him to claim any Universal Social Charge that may have been over deducted. From Revenue records, it does not appear that the taxpayer is due any tax refund, but he may of course contact the Region at 1890 22 24 25 if he has reason to believe otherwise.

Tax Code

67. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider classifying personal alarms for the elderly as a medical device for the purposes of VAT and applying zero VAT rating to these products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19334/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The VAT rating of goods and services is subject to the requirements of EU VAT law with which Irish VAT law must comply. While the EU VAT Directive and Irish VAT law provide for the possibility of applying a reduced of VAT to the supply of certain medical equipment this possibility does not extend to the supply of personal alarms. Nor is there any provision in VAT law that would make it possible to apply an exemption or the zero rate to the supply of such products. In the circumstances, the supply of personal alarms is liable to VAT at the standard rate, currently 23%. The supply of parts and accessories is also liable to VAT at the standard rate.

I would point out that Value-Added Tax (Refund of Tax) (No. 15) Order 1981 enables VAT paid on qualifying goods to be refunded where the goods are purchased for the exclusive use of disabled persons suffering a specified degree of disablement. The Order applies to goods which are aids or appliances, including parts and accessories, which might reasonably be treated as constructed or adapted having regard to the particular disablement of the person. A personal alarm for a disabled person may qualify for relief under the Order if it may be considered an aid or appliance constructed or adapted for use by a disabled person having regard to the particular disablement of that person. A Claim Form VAT 61A is available on the Revenue website (www.revenue.ie).

In addition, the Deputy may be aware of the Seniors Alert Scheme operated by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, which provides grant support for the supply of equipment to enable older people without sufficient means to continue to live securely in their homes. The scheme replaced the Scheme of Community Support for Older People in May 2010. The grant assistance is made available through community and voluntary groups registered with the Department. Grant support is available towards the cost of purchasing and installing monitored personal alarms, as well as additional or replacement pendants.

Persons wishing to apply for the grant support should contact the group registered to operate the scheme in their area. A list of these groups is available from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

NAMA Portfolio

68. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 260 of 16 April 2013, if he will clarify the apparent inconsistency in policy between the National Asset Management Agency providing detailed information in a press release on its development of the Millmount project in Dundonald, County Down, but declines to provide information on its plans with respect to the 1916 National Monument site at 14-17 Moore Street, Dublin. [19348/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by NAMA that its role is that of a secured lender and that properties continue to be managed by debtors or, in the case of enforcement, by the appointed receivers/administrators. NAMA does, however, take a close interest in the efficient management and sale of properties with a view to maximising loan repayment for the ultimate benefit of the taxpayer.

As stated in the answer to PQ No. 260 of 16th April 2013, in the case of property under the control of its debtors, NAMA is precluded, under Section 202 of the NAMA Act 2009, from disclosing confidential information. Confidential information is specifically defined to include information relating to debtors and their properties. Furthermore, Section 99 of the Act provides that, on acquisition of a loan, NAMA takes over the obligations of the participating institution under the loan, one of which is the contractual duty of confidentiality which the debtor enjoyed

while still a customer of the participating institution. Information about individual debtors is also protected against disclosure by the Data Protection Acts with which NAMA must comply as a data controller.

Similar restrictions do not apply to properties under the control of receivers or other insolvency practitioners appointed by NAMA. Such properties are listed on the Agency's website, www.nama.ie. Any decision in relation to the publication of information pertaining to an enforced property is taken in consultation with the appointed insolvency practitioner. I am advised by NAMA that the decision to provide funding to build a new 95-unit housing development in Dundonald, close to Belfast, was reached following a detailed cost-benefit evaluation which established that this was likely to produce the best return for the taxpayer from this site.

Banking Sector

69. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 280 of 16 April 2013, if he will identify the independent advisors to Allied Irish bank and the AIB pension fund in the transaction whereby €1.2 billion of EBS mortgages were transferred from AIB to the AIB pension fund in August 2012; if the same company acted as independent advisor on both sides of the transaction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19349/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been informed by AIB that for commercial confidentiality reasons AIB does not publicly disclose the details of contracts with individual external service providers. However, the bank can confirm that for the purpose of asset valuation, separate advisors were used by AIB and the Trustees of the AIB Pension Fund.

NAMA Legal Fees

70. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 274 of 16 April 2013, if he will confirm the reason legal fees were paid to ICSA Software International, a provider of computer software. [19350/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by NAMA that ICSA Software International provide software which is used by the legal division to managing compliance obligations of the various NAMA's SPV's.

Tax Code

71. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Finance his intentions to exempt (details supplied) from a benefit tax. [19420/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): It is a general principle of taxation that, as far as possible, income from all sources should be subject to taxation. In line with this principle, the majority of social welfare payments are reckonable as income for tax purposes. These include long-term payments such as Disablement Benefit, the State Pension, Widows, Invalidity and Blind Pensions, Carers Allowance and the One Parent Family Payment, as well as short term benefits such as Job Seekers Benefit. Treating these payments as income for tax purposes is essentially a matter of equity.

As a result of maternity benefit payments becoming liable to income tax for all claimants, from 1 July 2013, a number of possible tax outcomes could arise:

1. An individual may pay no income tax on their maternity benefit payment as their tax credits will be sufficient to reduce their tax liability to zero.
2. An individual may pay income tax on some or all of their maternity benefit payment solely at the standard rate.
3. An individual may pay income tax at the standard rate on a portion of the maternity benefit and the higher rate on the balance of the maternity benefit payment.
4. An individual may pay income tax on all of their maternity benefit payment at the higher rate.

I am fully aware that some employers do not pay a top up payment to their employees whilst on maternity leave. However, in such circumstances many mothers will not be subject to income tax on their maternity benefit payments as their personal credits will ensure that no tax arises on the social welfare income itself. Of course, the extent, if any, to which taxation actually arises in a given case depends on the level of income that a recipient has in a tax year. Accordingly, the tax liability on maternity benefit payments will ultimately depend on the total income of the individual or couple concerned in the tax year or years concerned.

There are situations currently where an employee continues to be paid by her employer, while on maternity leave and, based on her PRSI contributions, is entitled to Maternity Benefit from the Department of Social Protection. The non-taxation of such benefit currently results in an employee having a greater net take-home pay for the period of maternity benefit, than if she was at work. The rates of Maternity Benefit are earnings-related and are set to reflect post-tax income. It was never intended that individuals would gain financially by being on maternity leave. The introduction of the charge to income tax on maternity benefit payments will ensure that those with identical incomes will be treated the same for income tax purposes.

I would point out though, that maternity benefit payments will remain exempt from Universal Social Charge and PRSI. Given the current budgetary constraints I have no plans to introduce a tax exemption along the lines proposed.

Tax Collection

72. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to bring the State contributory pension within the standard PAYE taxing procedures (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19421/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The proposal put forward is that the contributory State pension should be taxed at source by the Department of Social Protection (DSP), and I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they agree with the proposal. Furthermore, it was recommended in the Report of the Commission on Taxation in 2009. The current situation is that a pensioner is liable to pay tax through the Income Tax self-assessment system or is taxed through the PAYE system based on an adjustment of tax credits. The Department of Social Protection provides details electronically to Revenue of the recipients of a range of DSP payments and their pension amounts on a weekly basis, and this also includes details of increases and decreases in the pension payment.

I am advised that while the Revenue Commissioners agree with the proposal that tax should be deducted at source by DSP there are a number of issues for DSP that need to be considered and addressed before it could be introduced. It is clear that deduction at source is the most efficient way to collect the right amount of tax from pensioners who have sources of income other

than the State pension.

Tax Yield

73. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Finance the tax yield from Capital Taxes (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19440/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The outturn yields from capital taxes (Capital Acquisitions Tax and Capital Gains Tax) in 2011 and 2012 as compared to the estimated yields for those years at Budget time are set out in the tables below.

Capital Acquisitions Tax

Year	Budget estimate €m	Outturn €m	Deviation €m
2011	250	244	-6
2012	295	283	-12

Capital Gains Tax

Year	Budget estimate€m	Outturn€m	Deviation€m
2011	410	416	+6
2012	355	414	+59

The outturn yield from capital taxes in any year as compared to the Budget estimate for that year will be determined by a number of variables aside from any changes introduced at Budget time, including movements in asset prices and, particularly in the case of Capital Gains Tax, the numbers of transactions and the behavioural impact on individuals of actual or anticipated changes in the tax treatment of those transactions.

Tax Reliefs Cost

74. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an update on tax reliefs (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19451/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the estimated cost to the Exchequer of all “legacy” property-related tax schemes in 2010, the latest year for which this information is available, was €327 million. It should be noted that any corresponding data returned by PAYE taxpayers in the income tax return (Form 12) is not captured in the Revenue computer system. However, any PAYE taxpayer with non-PAYE income greater than €3,174 is required to complete an income tax return (Form 11). The estimated relief claimed has assumed tax forgone at the 41% rate for 2010 in the case of individuals and 12.5% in the case of companies. The figures shown correspond to the maximum Exchequer cost in terms of income tax and corporation tax. Corresponding data cannot yet be provided for 2011 and 2012, as the tax returns for these years are either in the early stages of being filed or are not yet due.

I would like to remind the Deputy that Finance Act 2012 contained two measures related to property reliefs designed to reduce the ongoing cost of these schemes to the Exchequer and to eliminate it in as short a time as possible. With effect from 1 January 2012, a USC surcharge was introduced on all investors with annual gross incomes over €100,000. The surcharge ap-

plies at a rate of 5% on the amount of income sheltered by property reliefs in a given year and will be in addition to any normal USC payable on this income. This USC surcharge applies to all investors with this level of gross income regardless of whether they invested in Section 23 type investments or accelerated capital allowance schemes.

In addition, investors in accelerated capital allowance schemes will no longer be able to use any capital allowances beyond the tax life of the particular scheme where that tax life ends after 1 January 2015. Where the tax life of a scheme has ended before 1 January 2015 no carry forward of allowances into 2015 will be allowed. The delayed implementation of this measure is designed to give individuals time to adjust to the absence of the carry forward provision.

In relation to capital allowances in respect of capital expenditure on certain qualifying hospitals, the termination date for incurring qualifying expenditure was 31 December 2009. However, where certain conditions were met a later termination date of the 31st December 2013 may apply. There are now only two property based tax incentive schemes remaining in the tax code: the Mid-Shannon Corridor Tourism Infrastructure Investment scheme (only 80% of expenditure can qualify in certain areas) and the Qualifying Specialist Palliative Care Units scheme, which was not commenced.

All other such schemes have been terminated, subject to transitional arrangements for certain schemes where projects were already in the pipeline. However, due to their nature these reliefs continue to entail ongoing costs on the Exchequer in terms of tax foregone. Because of the nature of some of those reliefs, individuals have a right to claim them for a seven-year period. There are a number of legal considerations that would hinder the abolition of the reliefs during such run down periods.

I would like to assure the Deputy that the high earners' restriction continues to apply to these legacy reliefs, and ensures that those subject to the full restriction pay a minimum effective rate of income tax of 30% in addition to USC, PRSI and the surcharges mentioned above, where applicable. The latest report from Revenue "Analysis of High Income Individuals' Restriction 2010" which can be found at <http://taxpolicy.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/High-Income-Individuals-Report-2010.pdf> highlights the rates of tax paid by individuals subject to the restriction.

Tax Reliefs Cost

75. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will set out in tabular form the total number of investors and the gross cost to the Exchequer of Section 481 Film Tax relief in each year from 2002 to 2012; his estimate of the number of jobs supported by this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19455/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the information required by the Deputy is as follows:

S481 Film Tax Relief

Tax Year	Tax Cost	Number of Investors
	Euro m	
2002	21.65	2,235
2003	24.60	2,408
2004	19.5	1,888
2005	15.7	1,518
2006	36.4	3,464

Tax Year	Tax Cost	Number of Investors
2007	31.1	3,049
2008	32.8	3,200
2009	42.0	2,553
2010	65.3	3,877
2011	45.7	2,669
2012	58.3*	3,319*

*Cost and number of investors is provisional and may be revised

My Department published a review of section 481 Film Relief in 2012. Based on work undertaken for that review, I can advise the Deputy that the 57 film projects certified by the Revenue Commissioners in 2011 supported employment for crew, cast and extras of over 15,000 individuals.

Bank Guarantee Scheme Bond Repayments

76. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide the total amount of pre-guarantee/unguaranteed debt paid out since the bank guarantee up to March 2011, and from March 2011 to date, by category senior secured, senior unsecured, junior secured, junior unsecured, retail and corporate deposits, interbank deposits, other liabilities, including the payment schedules, dates and tranche amounts, and including recipients, where known; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19458/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Department of Finance does not collect information in the detail asked in this question. Furthermore, some of the information could not be collated due to data protection and commercial confidentiality requirements. However, I will collate as much information on these issues as possible under these headings and respond directly to the Deputy.

IBRC Liquidation

77. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 275, 276, 277 and 278 of 16 April, 2013, if he will provide details of the way that the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation assets relating to the €15bn the National Assets Management Agency funding were estimated, including any external verification; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19459/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): To be clear, NAMA issued Senior Bonds totalling €12.928 billion to purchase the CBI's remaining lending to IBRC under the Facility Deed. That lending is backed by a floating charge on the otherwise unencumbered assets of IBRC and supported by a Ministerial guarantee. This ended the CBI's lending relationship with IBRC and NAMA became the largest creditor to the liquidation. The Special Liquidator is charged with discharging this loan, which was acquired by NAMA, through a valuation and sales process of the remaining assets of IBRC over the coming months. As the Deputy will be aware extensive work has been undertaken by both the former Board of IBRC and my officials in relation to the winding up of IBRC. The Deputy will appreciate it was not possible to fully engage with the bank or its management in relation to the liquidation in advance of the transaction as this would have triggered legal obligations for the directors of the bank. However, extensive information in relation to the assets and liabilities of IBRC was provided to and held by

the Department of Finance as part of its normal engagement with the bank including the audited Annual and Interim financial reports and accounts for the periods prior to liquidation, loan loss and provisioning exercises, internal and external auditor reports, Board papers and presentations, monthly management reports, financial presentations and other information provided to officials as part of their normal interaction with the bank.

IBRC Liquidation

78. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 275, 276, 277 and 278 of 16 April, 2013 if he will provide the balance sheet of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation at the time of liquidation, and detail where each asset and liability has moved to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19460/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The latest balance sheet of IBRC can be found in the Bank's last published Annual Report & Accounts as at 31 December 2011 and the 2012 Interim Accounts. The Special Liquidators are not in a position to provide any additional confidential commercially sensitive financial information as this could potentially have a detrimental impact on asset recovery.

IBRC Liquidation

79. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 275, 276, 277 and 278 of 16 April, 2013 if he will indicate who incurs the loss if the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation assets securing the €15bn debt purchased by the National Assets Management Agency from the Central Bank realise less than €15bn when sold; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19461/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As part of the role of the liquidators, the assets of IBRC will be valued independently before being sold. Any assets not sold to third parties (including loan counterparties and other financial institutions) at or above the valuation price will be sold to NAMA at the independent valuation. To be clear, NAMA issued Senior Bonds totalling €12.928bn to purchase the CBI's remaining lending to IBRC under the Facility Deed. The process described above will establish if the value of IBRC's assets are sufficient to cover the value of NAMA bonds issued. The outcome of this process will not be known, with any certainty, until the independent valuation and asset sale process has completed. If the value of the assets is insufficient to covers amounts due to NAMA then that shortfall will be compensated by the Exchequer. If the value of the assets is greater than €12.928bn then the surplus after NAMA has been paid will go to the other creditors of IBRC.

IBRC Liquidation

80. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 275, 276, 277 and 278 of 16 April, 2013, the reason preferred creditors will be paid before debt purchased by the National Assets Management Agency from the Central Bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19462/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Special Liquidators that the debt purchased by NAMA from the Central Bank is a claim debt secured by a floating charge over the assets of IBRC. The sales proceeds received through the sale of the

Company's assets will be used to repay the creditors of the Company subject to the normal legal priorities, as set out in the Companies Act's. Once the costs of the liquidation have been paid payments will be made to those creditors who are classified as preferential creditors.

Section 285(7) of the Companies Act, 1936 (as amended) ("the Act") provides that preferential debts shall "have priority over the claims of holders of debentures under any floating charge created by the company, and be paid accordingly out of any property comprised in or subject to that charge".

IBRC Liquidation

81. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question Numbers 275 and 278 of 16 April 2013 if he will indicate the total pension funds affected, including those contained in client accounts;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19463/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Special Liquidators that the total value of the 23 individual Irish pension fund accounts placed on deposit with Irish Bank Resolution Corporation at the time of liquidation was €1m. I am advised that this excludes any funds placed on deposit with the Bank in client accounts opened on behalf of beneficiaries, where these beneficiaries are Irish pension funds. Funds in client accounts are placed by intermediaries, including brokers and the Special Liquidators and/or the bank would not have the details of the underlying deposit holders. The Special Liquidators are therefore unable to confirm the total value of pension funds that could be contained in client accounts at the time of liquidation. The status of all deposits in IBRC is currently under review with the respective Guarantee Scheme Operators, regarding consideration for payment under the respective schemes.

IBRC Liquidation

82. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Questions Nos 275, 276, 277 and 278 of 16 April 2013, if he will confirm that the €1 million specified in the answer is the sum total of the 23 individual pension fund accounts also specified in the answer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19464/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Special Liquidators that the €1m specified previously is the sum total of the 23 individual pension fund accounts.

Tax Forms

83. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding a HPL1 form request in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19471/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that, according to their records, the Form HPL1 submitted on behalf of the taxpayer and spouse was completed and returned on the 5th March. A further Form HPL1 received from the taxpayer on the 5th April has today been completed and returned to him.

Property Taxation Application

84. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Finance if he will expedite a request in relation to a property tax application form in respect of a person (details supplied) in County

Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19479/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the PPSN provided by the Deputy does not refer to the person in question. Revenue would like to make direct contact with the person to assist him in meeting his Local Property Tax (LPT) obligations. If the Deputy makes direct contact with Ms. Jane Scanlan at 061 488021 or jascanla@revenue.ie to confirm the person's details, Revenue will make immediate contact and ensure the person has every assistance he requires to file his LPT Return and pay the tax amount due.

School Staffing Appeals Mechanism

85. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Education and Skills with regard to circular 0013/2013, as it relates to the primary school staffing appeals, if he will clarify the aspects of this circular which a school (details provided) in County Cork did not meet in respect of its appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19172/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The criteria used for the allocation of teachers to schools is published annually on the Department's website. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September. The staffing arrangements for the coming school year 2013/14 are set out in Circular 0013/2013 which is available on the website. The staffing appeal process at primary level includes the provision whereby schools with a high concentration of pupils requiring English as an additional language (EAL) can apply for further additional temporary language support posts. The appeal criteria are set out in Circular 0013/2013.

The school referred to by the Deputy submitted an appeal under the EAL criterion. Having considered the school's application in the context of the published grounds, the Board refused the appeal at its meeting in 27th/28th March 2013. The school was notified accordingly. The Primary Staffing Appeals Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

Schools Amalgamation

86. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide clarification regarding reports of the amalgamation of two schools (details supplied) in Dublin 13; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19182/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can confirm that there is no record in my Department of any amalgamation proposal being received from the schools to which the Deputy refers.

School Curriculum

87. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider setting up a pilot project in primary and secondary schools to start coding clubs with the aim of incorporating coding skills into the national curriculum. [19206/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Currently the NCCA is developing a short course that includes coding/ programming which will be available to schools for their Junior Cycle programme from September 2014. Through participation in this course it is expected that they will learn core computational concepts. All the key skills in the Framework for Junior Cycle highlight the use of digital technology. It will permeate the experiences of all Junior Cycle students as the new Framework is implemented. The NCCA is aware of

the “Scratch” and other coding type initiatives currently taking place in schools which would inform their deliberations.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

88. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when an application for a Student Universal Support Ireland grant will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19294/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland, that on 19th April 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.

State Examinations

89. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the resolution available to a leaving certificate student (details supplied) in County Cork who is faced with a clash of examination times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19324/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In the case of certificate examinations, students are prohibited under the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools (2004/2005) from taking certain subject combinations, for example Classical Studies and Latin or Economics and Agricultural Economics, in the same Leaving Certificate examination. This is specified in Rule 37 (g).

Schools Building Projects Status

90. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will confirm the reason a school (details supplied) in County Cavan, has not progressed to building stage in view of the fact that its Band 1 listing is dating back to 2004; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19335/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is at an early stage of architectural planning. Due to competing demands on my Department’s capital budget, imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of additional school accommodation to meet increasing demographic requirements, it was not possible to include this project in the five year construction programme. School building projects, including the project referred to by the Deputy, which have not been included in the five year construction programme will continue to be progressed through the design stages of architectural planning in anticipation of the possibility of further funds being available to the Department in future years. However, in light of current competing demands on the Department’s capital budget, it is not possible to indicate at this time, the timeframe for the progression of this project to construction stage.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

91. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a decision has been taken to continue to increase the pupil teacher ratio in fee paying schools until it reaches 28:1 being the option included in the McCarthy report; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [19346/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I published a report entitled “Fee Charging Schools - Analysis of Fee Income” in respect of the discretionary income available to the 55 fee charging schools in the country. I commissioned the report in question in order to inform future budgetary decisions in relation to the allocation of teachers to schools in particular. I do not propose at this stage to anticipate any specific decisions the Government might take in respect of the next budget. It is important to look at the context in which exchequer funding to fee charging schools must be approached. Ireland faces further budgets where a reduction in public expenditure across all areas of public provision, including education, will be necessary. Teacher allocation to all primary and second level schools will remain in focus throughout the period of fiscal adjustment because it represents a significant proportion of my Department’s overall budget. The extent to which teaching posts can continue to be allocated to fee charging schools must remain under consideration in that context.

Schools Building Projects Status

92. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide an update on the permanent school building in respect of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19347/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The school, referred to by the Deputy, has applied to my Department for large scale capital funding for a new school. The current status of all projects on the school building programme, including the school in question, may be viewed on my Department’s website at www.education.ie. and this is being updated regularly throughout the year. As the Deputy will be aware, the school is currently in temporary accommodation on lands controlled by South Dublin County Council. At a recent meeting with the Council, my Department raised the issue of the land holding. The Council advised that they are endeavouring to rectify title issues in regard to a portion of the site on which the school resides. Once the Council is in a position to dispose of the land, it is my Department’s intention to acquire same.

In light of the need to prioritise available funding for the provision of additional school accommodation, the delivery of major school projects required to meet future demographic demand will be the main focus for capital investment in the coming years. The 5 Year Construction Plan that I announced in March 2012 outlines the major school projects that will commence construction over the duration of the Plan. It is not possible therefore at this point to indicate when a project for the school in question will be progressed.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

93. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Education and Skills with regard to the pupil-teacher ratio, if he will outline the way that this figure is calculated for primary schools; if he will list the posts that are used for this calculation and the posts that are not used for this calculation;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19356/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Pupil-Teacher ratio at first level is calculated by dividing total enrolment in all aided First Level Schools (including Special Schools) as of 30th September in a given year by the number of teaching posts in June of the following year. Total number of teachings posts include a whole-time equivalent of part-time teachers as well as all types of teachers from walking principals to resource teachers for

special needs to language support teachers as well as ordinary classroom teachers. Pupil teacher ratio is not available at individual school level. For 2011/2012 the PTR at primary level was 16.2. The PTR for 2012/2013 will be available during the summer months.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme Eligibility

94. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the denial of a place on a VTOS course, on grounds of progression, to a person (details supplied) in County Cork who has been out of education since 2005;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19379/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): There are a limited number of VTOS places available annually with City of Cork Vocational Education Committee (VEC) having sanction for 420 places in the current academic year. The VEC has advised officials in my Department that the number of applications received was greater than the number of available VTOS places. In order to allocate VTOS places, the VEC has prioritised applicants with lower educational qualifications. As the person referred to by the Deputy was awarded a FETAC Level 6 qualification in 2005 they were not allocated a VTOS place. It is open to this person to apply to the Department of Social Protection for the Back to Education Allowance.

Third Level Facilities

95. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding public access to a university library; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19381/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the Universities Act 1997 universities are autonomous statutory bodies and the management and operation of their facilities is therefore the responsibility of the college authorities. Accordingly I have no function in relation to access to the library of the university in question. I understand that the university in question has various arrangements in place for non-members of the university to access the library and its resources and members of the public requiring access for research and scholarly purposes may apply to use the library as either an external reader or an external borrower. Details of the arrangements are available on the university's website.

Higher Education Grants Eligibility Criteria

96. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to review the higher education grant scheme to assess income based on net rather than gross income; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19387/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Student grant applications are means tested on gross income from all sources earned inside and outside the State within a specified reference period. The assessment of income from the same starting point is deemed to be fair and reasonable because this approach eliminates any distortion which might arise from different spending arrangements in different households. In the interest of equity, I currently have no plans to change this procedure.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

97. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the circumstance behind the decision to remove the entitlement to resource teaching hours in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19417/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that, in primary schools, teaching supports for pupils with special educational needs are provided in two ways. Under the terms of the General Allocation Model (GAM) of teaching supports, schools are resourced to cater for pupils whose educational psychological assessment places them in the high incidence, or less complex, disability category, including children with mild general learning difficulties. In this context, children with a mild intellectual disability qualify for resources under GAM. Separately, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocates additional resource teaching hours to schools for children who have been assessed within the low incidence, or more complex, category of special need, as defined by my Department's Circular Sp Ed 02/05. Once allocations have been made, it is a matter for schools to monitor and utilise their allocation of resource teaching support, including supports allocated under the GAM, to best support the needs of qualifying pupils, in accordance with my Department's guidance. Should a parent be dissatisfied with the manner in which the resources or facilities which have been provided to support their child's education are being applied in school, or with regard to their child's educational progress in school, they should raise this matter directly with their school Principal or the Board of Management of the school. All schools have been advised to apply to the NCSE for resource teaching and SNA support for the 2013/14 school year by 15th March 2013 and schools will be notified by SENOs of their resource teaching and SNA allocation in advance of the 2013/14 school year, based on the number of valid applications received. The position in relation to pupils with Down syndrome attending mainstream schools is that they may receive additional teaching support in primary schools, either under the terms of the General Allocation Model (GAM) of teaching supports, if the pupil's educational psychological assessment places the pupil in the mild general learning disability/high incidence disability category, or through an allocation of individual additional resource teaching hours which are allocated by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), if the child is assessed as being within the low incidence category of special need, as defined by my Department's Circular Sp Ed 02/05. I have asked the National Council for Special Education to provide me with policy advice on the issue of whether Down syndrome should be reclassified as a low incidence disability in all instances, regardless of assessed cognitive ability. This advice will be included in the NCSE's comprehensive policy advice on how the education system can best support children with special educational needs which is currently in preparation and which is expected in the coming months. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

Schools Building Projects Status

98. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has received an application for capital funding for the re-development of a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; the status and band assigned to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19424/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can confirm to the Deputy that the school to which he refers has an application with my Department for large scale capital funding. The current status of all schools on the school building programme may be viewed on my Department's website at www.education.ie. The Deputy will be aware that the Five Year

Construction Plan, that I announced on 9 March 2012, 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. Given the need to meet demographic growth, the delivery of new schools, together with extension projects to meet future demand, will be the main focus of the Department's budget for the coming years. In this context, it is not possible to indicate at this point when a building project for the school in question will be progressed.

Teachers' Remuneration

99. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason his Department has failed to pay a teacher (details supplied) in County Kildare at the appropriate point on the scale for post primary qualified teachers with post graduate qualification working at primary level which is the third point on the scale; and the reason the person has not been paid an allowance for their honours level teaching diploma. [19425/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): An official from my Department was in contact with the person referred to by the Deputy with a view to resolving the queries raised by him.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

100. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to put in place special needs educational units within existing mainstream second level schools acknowledging that new second level schools are being built with such facilities but recognising that existing second level schools are in the main lacking in such facilities and leading to large numbers of students with special needs availing of such facilities at primary level but they do not have this option when they reach second level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19437/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) through its local Special Education Needs Officers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from primary and post primary schools for special educational needs supports, including the establishment of special classes or units in various geographical areas as necessary.

It is general practice for my Department to include a special needs unit in the accommodation brief for new school buildings. In the case of existing schools, additional accommodation may not be required in all cases to establish a special class or special needs unit as the schools concerned may have sufficient capacity to facilitate this. My Department endeavours to respond positively to applications from existing schools for additional accommodation where the need for a special class or special needs unit has been approved by the NCSE and where the schools existing accommodation is not capable of hosting the additional accommodation required.

School Staffing

101. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the mainstream staffing for 2013/14 in respect of a school (details supplied) in Dublin 11; if he will outline his intentions with regard to subsuming and retaining concessionary legacy teaching posts which form part of the current and future staffing arrangement for this school;

and if there is an appeal mechanism to appeal against this decision. [19453/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The staffing arrangements for the 2013/14 school year are set out in Primary Circular 0013/2013 which is available on my Department's website. Following the Government's decision of 21 February 2012, the school to which the Deputy refers was among the schools which retained disadvantaged legacy posts from previous disadvantage schemes.

As the Deputy may be aware, a range of factors contribute to determining the staffing requirement for individual schools including changes to enrolment and the reforms to the teacher allocation process in 2012. As the teaching allocation to schools, including disadvantage legacy posts, are enrolment based, this determines whether schools gain or lose teaching posts from year to year. Some schools seemed to be under the impression that the Government decision of February 2012 in relation to legacy posts, implied that they would retain the number of legacy posts which they had in the 2011/12 school year. I wish to clarify that legacy posts are retained in schools from year to year, only where warranted, based on the enrolment of the previous 30th September. The individual schemes such as Breaking the cycle, Giving children an Even Break and the Disadvantage Areas Scheme no longer operate.

The enrolment at the school in question, which is a DEIS Band 2 school currently has two legacy posts. The school's enrolment increased slightly on 30 September 2012 over its previous year's enrolment. As a result of this increase, one of the legacy teaching posts, which is part of the current staffing (2012/13 school year), will be subsumed as part of the mainstream staffing for the 2013/14 school year. The school will retain one legacy teaching post for the 2013/14 school year. In summary, the school in question will retain the same number of classroom teaching posts for the 2013/14 school year as it has for the current school year, operating a more favourable pupil teacher ratio than other comparable DEIS schools while not exceeding this entitlement for the 2013/14 school year.

In-service Training

102. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if retired principals are being employed by his Department, the vocational education committees or directly by schools or colleges to provide continual personal development in-service training for teachers; and if he will provide in tabular form the money paid to retired teachers providing this service on an individual basis for the past two years. [19468/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department does not employ retired principals or deputy principals for the purposes of the provision of in service training for teachers. However, I understand that a number of qualified teachers, including retired principals, are employed on a part time basis through Blackrock Education Centre to assist national support services to deliver CPD for schools in identified priority areas in the primary and post primary sectors. The part-time personnel provide support in specialist areas where there is no capacity within the full-time teams.

In the school year 2010-2011 retired personnel, including principals, worked for an average of just over 4 days, and in the school year 2011-2012 retired personnel, including principals, worked for an average of just over 5 days.

The amounts paid by Blackrock EC in the period 2010-2012 are as follows:

2010 - €104,509 of which €53,233 relates to travel and subsistence expenses;

2011 - €247,380 of which €135,444 relates to travel and subsistence expenses;

2012 - €94,433 of which €33,021 relates to travel and subsistence expenses.

The information requested by the Deputy in respect of VECs, colleges of education or individual schools is not held centrally by my Department.

The following revised reply was received from the Department on 26 April 2013.

My Department does not employ retired principals or deputy principals for the purposes of the provision of in service training for teachers. However, I understand that a number of qualified teachers, including retired principals, are employed on a part time basis through Blackrock Education Centre to assist national support services to deliver CPD for schools in identified priority areas in the primary and post primary sectors. The part-time personnel provide support in specialist areas where there is no capacity within the full-time teams. In the school year 2010-2011 retired personnel, including principals, worked for an average of just over 4 days, and in the school year 2011-2012 retired personnel, including principals, worked for an average of just over 5 days. The amounts paid by Blackrock EC in the period 2010-2012 are as follows:

2010 - €104,509 of which €53,233 relates to travel and subsistence expenses;

2011 - €247,380 of which €135,444 relates to travel and subsistence expenses;

2012 - €429,882 of which €163,027 relates to travel and subsistence expenses.

The information requested by the Deputy in respect of VECs, colleges of education or individual schools is not held centrally by my Department.

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

103. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if persons who have worked in the education sector and have availed of retirement under the terms of the Croke Park 1 deal are barred from returning in any way to public service or receiving payments for constituency work, training teachers, principals, deputy principals or school/college management in-service training or delivery of continual personal development of any kind. [19469/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I assume the Deputy is referring to public servants who retired before 29 February 2012 with their pensions calculated by reference to their salary prior to the introduction of the FEMPI (No. 2) Act 2009. No specific terms and conditions were applied to this group of retired public servants compared to other retired public servants.

My Department has introduced measures to minimise the recruitment of retired teachers in schools. Schools may only employ a retired teacher where no appropriately qualified unemployed registered teacher is available. Furthermore, retired teachers must start at the first point of the teachers salary scale and are treated as new entrants to teaching for pay purposes. Under the Employment Control Framework for the Higher Education Sector, retired staff who are re-engaged can only be paid a maximum of 20% of their pre-retirement salary, including any salary adjustments which may have occurred since their retirement. However, notwithstanding those provisions, there is no bar as such to retired public servants returning to public service employment.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

104. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a full Student

Universal Support Ireland grant will be awarded to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19484/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have been informed by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that the application from the student in question is being reviewed and SUSI will contact the student directly in relation to the outcome shortly.

Office of Public Works Projects

105. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason for the delay in concluding an agreement to purchase a site at a location (details provided) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19171/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): A site in Macroom has been identified as a suitable location for a new Garda Station. The proposed site also has the capacity to cater for a new Fire Station and it is intended that the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Cork County Council will jointly purchase the site. Officials in OPW and the Council are actively engaged in the drafting of an agreement, which will govern the purchase and site management arrangements. The drafting of this agreement is at a very advanced stage and is expected to be completed shortly.

Departmental Expenditure

106. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if any of his Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19220/13]

107. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide the month by month profile for his Department's 2013 capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19236/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 106 and 107 together.

The capital allocation for my Department for 2012 was €0.500m. None of this budget was used for current expenditure. The capital allocation for my Department for 2013 is €0.500m. Please see monthly profile in attached table:

Vote 11 - Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Capital budget 2013

Month	Profiled spend
January	1,000
February	0
March	0
April	10,000
May	186,000
June	42,000
July	10,000
August	10,000
September	186,000
October	10,000

Month	Profiled spend
November	10,000
December	35,000
Total	500,000

A further €5.4m of capital is allocated on Vote 18 (Shared Services), which is a function under the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. This amount is profiled as follows:

Vote 18 - Shared Services

Month	Profiled spend
January	
February	
March	
April	1,510,000
May	150,000
June	400,000
July	550,000
August	650,000
September	550,000
October	425,000
November	575,000
December	590,000
Total	5,400,000

National Procurement Service Savings

108. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide details of the contrast in price and service between the mandatory Viking contract for stationery consumables for schools and existing community based purchasing groups such as that provided by a company (details supplied) in County Meath.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19303/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I can confirm that the National Procurement Service (NPS) has no contracts with Viking. Furthermore, as the NPS has no contract with *Comdex Technology* (County Meath), I am not in a position to comment on their prices and service provided.

Public Sector Pensions

109. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if there will be an assurance given that no further cuts will be made to the pensions of retired Gardaí; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19327/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy will be aware the Government stated its intention to require public service pensioners with pensions in excess of €32,500 to make a further contribution to the budgetary consolidation measures, in conjunction with the contribution being sought from serving staff. That was noted in

the Labour Relations Commission proposals for a new public service agreement.

Following the non-acceptance of those proposals by the Public Services Committee of the ICTU, the Government yesterday reaffirmed its requirement for €300m of pay and pension bill savings in 2013 and €1bn by 2015. The Government further agreed to request the CEO of the Labour Relations Commission to make contact with the parties in the coming days to establish whether or not there is a basis for a negotiated agreement to meet these budgetary targets.

Property Valuations

110. **Deputy Ray Butler** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason the entire premises of sporting organisations are being evaluated under the commercial rateable jurisdiction of local authorities in view of the fact that this is leading to excessive financial pressure and potential closures of sports clubs' facilities nationwide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19328/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Commissioner of Valuation is independent in the exercise of his duties under the Valuation Act, 2001 and the making of valuations for rating purposes is his sole prerogative and the statute does not accord the Minister any function in this regard. The position is that the Valuation Act, 2001 provides for the exemption from rates of land that is developed for sport such as playing pitches. There is also provision for the exemption of community halls which are not licensed to sell alcohol and where the facilities are not used for profit and involve participation by inhabitants of the locality generally and are recreational or otherwise of a social nature.

However, the Act provides that where an organisation or club is registered under the Registration of Clubs (Ireland) Act, 1904 and is licensed to sell alcohol, all the club buildings, wherever located, are rateable in their entirety. The legislation is unambiguous in this regard and the Valuation Office has no option but to consider all such premises to be rateable. However, in all such cases exemption from rates can be achieved by the cessation of the liquor licence.

The sale of alcohol is a commercial activity and the club is competing with other commercial licensed premises in their locality, all of which are rateable. The apportionment of club premises between areas used for the sale of alcohol and those areas used for other activities could be operationally problematic and lead to anomalies in the rateability of premises licensed to sell alcohol. There are no plans to provide for special treatment of licensed clubs under the Valuation Act, which maintains the long-standing principle that all commercial activities are valued in a fair and equitable manner.

Departmental Expenditure

111. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if any of his Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19218/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): None of my Department's 2012 Capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes. My Department utilised the provisions of the Multi-Annual Capital Envelope Framework to carry over €25m of unspent Capital allocation from 2012 for use in 2013 in order to maximise the amount of funding available for job creation purposes.

Departmental Expenditure

112. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide the month by month profile for his Department's 2013 capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19234/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department's 2013 Capital allocation under the recently published Revised Estimates Volume is €454.5m. This allocation supports the transition to an economy based on exports, enterprise and innovation through Capital funding to Agencies and Programmes such as IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the County Enterprise Boards, Shannon Development, InterTrade Ireland, INTERREG, the National Standards Authority of Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL) and the Temporary Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme.

The drawdown of exchequer monies through the Agencies of my Department is based on commitments made in a given year and projected draw-downs against those commitments in the year in question. The drawdown of exchequer financial support by companies or other bodies (e.g. Competency Centres) is demand-led and can only take place if the company or body in question has progressed a given project in line with the agreement entered into with the State at the time of the financial commitment.

The pattern of disbursement of funds is essentially determined according to this demand-led nature of grant payments and issues relating to the timing of expenditure and significant drawdown occurs in the last quarter of the year. The month by month profile of anticipated expenditure from the 2013 allocation is provided below.

CAPITAL ALLOCATION 2013 - Profile of drawdown from Exchequer on a month-by-month basis

REV Allocation:	PRO-FILES	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
€454.500m	€m	27.808	11.552	39.964	33.035	38.925	37.124	38.473	21.778	37.949	49.669	39.921	78.302

Job Creation Data

113. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs created, and jobs sustained, by each county enterprise board for each year since 2007. [19307/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy on the number of jobs created by the County Enterprise Boards (CEBs) for each year since 2007 is set out in Tables 1 to 4. Please note that prior to 2010, CEBs could report only on the number of jobs existing in CEB supported companies and the measurement of job creation was whether this figure had gone up or down since the previous year – CEBs assist in creating jobs every year, even those in which the overall employment figures fell.

In 2010, the CEBs' data recording system was changed to encompass the same format as used by Forfás, thereby enabling the CEBs to produce figures for jobs existing, job gains and job losses for the years from 2010 onwards.

Table 1: CEB Employment Statistics 2012

CEB	No of Clients	Full Time Employees	Other Time Employees	Full Time Gains	Full Time Losses	Other Time Gains	Other Time Losses	Net Full Time Gains/ Losses	Net Other Time Gains/ Losses	Net Gains/ Losses (Full Time + (Other Time /2))
Carlow	261	1258	415	254	-94	165	-74	160	91	205.5
Cavan	256	1071	436	138	-131	150	-106	7	44	29
Clare	437	1255	599	200	-120	105	-174	80	-69	45.5
Cork City	242	796	114	52	-52	19	-14	0	5	2.5
Cork North	89	400	77	59	-30	12	-12	29	0	29
Cork South	266	1089	256	179	-108	97	-55	71	42	92
Cork West	173	638	350	83	-77	58	-72	6	-14	-1
Donegal	348	1578	856	131	-311	255	-99	-180	156	-102
Dublin City	842	2067	552	382	-364	183	-101	18	82	59
Dublin Dun Laoghaire/ Rathdown	459	1802	839	337	-64	511	-76	273	435	490.5
Dublin Fingal	395	1237	491	240	-205	135	-156	35	-21	24.5
Dublin South	347	1076	441	168	-113	135	-88	55	47	78.5
Galway County/ City	632	1556	169	124	-165	78	-45	-41	33	-24.5
Kerry	516	1236	749	316	-369	199	-368	-53	-169	-137.5
Kildare	170	800	313	133	-160	77	-108	-27	-31	-42.5
Kilkenny	376	775	204	84	-155	30	-81	-71	-51	-96.5
Laois	267	652	344	69	-99	98	-73	-30	25	-17.5
Leitrim	236	340	183	35	-45	32	-33	-10	-1	-10.5
Limerick City	183	654	270	100	-151	96	-74	-51	22	-40
Limerick County	218	1058	192	73	-81	2	-20	-8	-18	-17
Longford	313	831	265	79	-100	55	-38	-21	17	-12.5
Louth	345	866	441	148	-177	84	-90	-29	-6	-32
Mayo	255	1000	329	43	-50	35	-34	-7	1	-6.5
Meath	358	1107	341	175	-94	145	-58	81	87	124.5
Monaghan	171	902	386	120	-155	83	-60	-35	23	-23.5

Questions - Written Answers

CEB	No of Clients	Full Time Employees	Other Time Employees	Full Time Gains	Full Time Losses	Other Time Gains	Other Time Losses	Net Full Time Gains/ Losses	Net Other Time Gains/ Losses	Net Gains/ Losses (Full Time + (Other Time /2))
Offaly	283	742	294	75	-90	41	-72	-15	-31	-30.5
Ros-common	212	612	258	81	-106	53	-73	-25	-20	-35
Sligo	231	813	475	117	-87	144	-113	30	31	45.5
Tipperary (NR)	175	365	160	41	-125	53	-40	-84	13	-77.5
Tipperary (SR)	219	706	325	53	-17	10	-6	36	4	38
Waterford City	247	665	265	76	-106	64	-38	-30	26	-17
Waterford County	200	590	204	110	-105	97	-67	5	30	20
West-Meath	281	1022	379	130	-218	97	-136	-88	-39	-107.5
Wexford	309	1193	445	269	-163	140	-173	106	-33	89.5
Wicklow	198	678	653	184	-115	234	-176	69	58	98
Grand Total	10510	33430	13070	4858	-4602	3772	-3003	256	769	640.5

Table 2: CEB Employment Statistics 2011

CEB	No of Clients	Full Time Employees	Other Time Employees	Full Time Gains	Full Time Losses	Other Time Gains	Other Time Losses	Net Full Time Gains/ Losses	Net Other Time Gains/ Losses	Net Gains/ Losses (Full Time + (Other Time /2))
Carlow	256	1098	324	190	-138	60	-133	52	-73	15.5
Cavan	253	1062	392	154	-124	95	-98	30	-3	28.5
Clare	431	1175	668	56	-33	44	-13	23	31	38.5
Cork City	225	796	109	41	-108	15	-6	-67	9	-62.5
Cork North	84	371	77	57	-105	12	-19	-48	-7	-51.5
Cork South	246	1018	214	164	-139	113	-93	25	20	35
Cork West	171	632	364	77	-94	102	-44	-17	58	12
Donegal	367	1758	700	310	-316	236	-164	-6	72	30
Dublin City	815	2062	478	293	-186	143	-181	107	-38	88

CEB	No of Clients	Full Time Employees	Other Time Employees	Full Time Gains	Full Time Losses	Other Time Gains	Other Time Losses	Net Full Time Gains/ Losses	Net Other Time Gains/ Losses	Net Gains/ Losses (Full Time + (Other Time /2))
Dublin Dun Laoghaire/ Rathdown	437	1063	414	159	-117	98	-202	42	-104	-10
Dublin Fingal	382	1202	512	98	-84	163	-20	14	143	85.5
Dublin South	332	1006	389	122	-82	101	-91	40	10	45
Galway County/ City	1019	1597	136	250	-711	78	-92	-461	-14	-468
Kerry	552	1289	918	348	-368	399	-307	-20	92	26
Kildare	164	830	345	106	-208	135	-88	-102	47	-78.5
Kilkenny	436	846	255	151	-147	103	-55	4	48	28
Laois	278	682	319	136	-160	178	-100	-24	78	15
Leitrim	278	336	184	61	-117	80	-46	-56	34	-39
Limerick City	233	743	253	174	-140	82	-84	34	-2	33
Limerick County	294	1033	205	190	-135	92	-28	55	64	87
Longford	327	852	248	117	-130	81	-80	-13	1	-12.5
Louth	348	895	447	255	-241	194	-106	14	88	58
Mayo	264	1007	328	63	-163	48	-138	-100	-90	-145
Meath	379	1026	254	358	-163	120	-105	195	15	202.5
Monaghan	224	937	363	111	-121	95	-65	-10	30	5
Offaly	276	760	327	224	-95	69	-61	129	8	133
Roscommon	220	654	278	107	-94	63	-74	13	-11	7.5
Sligo	345	783	444	121	-101	156	-57	20	99	69.5
Tipperary (NR)	176	449	147	88	-48	32	-50	40	-18	31
Tipperary (SR)	264	667	321	77	-251	60	-115	-174	-55	-201.5
Waterford City	266	590	226	178	-186	85	-58	-8	27	5.5
Waterford County	215	589	174	59	-80	50	-32	-21	18	-12
West Meath	406	1111	418	188	-211	169	-72	-23	97	25.5
Wexford	370	1088	478	167	-255	148	-103	-88	45	-65.5
Wicklow	211	607	591	81	-250	145	-91	-169	54	-142
Grand Total	11544	32614	12300	5331	-5901	3844	-3071	-570	773	-183.5

Table 3: CEB Employment Statistics 2010

CEB	No of Clients	Full Time Jobs in Clients	Other Time Jobs in Clients	Full Time Jobs Gains	Full Time Jobs Losses	Other Time Jobs Gains	Other Time Jobs Losses	Net Full Time Gains/ Losses	Net Other Time Gains/ Losses	Net Gains/ Losses (Full Time + (Other Time/ 2))
Carlow	224	1046	397	160	-56	83	-79	104	4	106.0
Cavan	252	1063	414	205	-185	195	-84	20	111	75.5
Clare	410	1150	637	69	-62	77	-16	7	61	37.5
Cork City	176	856	100	63	-133	0	-10	-70	-10	-75.0
Cork North	75	419	84	24	-128	39	-8	-104	31	-88.5
Cork South	216	993	193	102	-83	41	-43	19	-2	18.0
Cork West	182	649	306	65	-49	66	-49	16	17	24.5
Donegal	305	1676	610	188	-232	146	-88	-44	58	-15.0
Dublin City	905	1975	510	468	-780	333	-181	-312	152	-236.0
Dublin Dun Laoghaire/ Rathdown	425	1021	518	318	-158	118	-77	160	41	180.5
Dublin Fingal	374	1186	369	110	-157	59	-82	-47	-23	-58.5
Dublin South	311	966	379	136	-84	92	-76	52	16	60.0
Galway County/ City	983	2056	150	149	-311	25	-62	-162	-37	-180.5
Kerry	611	1301	824	287	-224	190	-196	63	-6	60.0
Kildare	166	932	298	169	-130	108	-74	39	34	56.0
Kilkenny	416	842	207	72	-69	28	-44	3	-16	-5.0
Laois	186	654	199	80	-165	69	-93	-85	-24	-97.0
Leitrim	246	392	150	42	-44	19	-47	-2	-28	-16.0
Limerick City	177	699	253	105	-122	101	-48	-17	53	9.5
Limerick County	265	976	141	75	-47	29	-7	28	22	39.0
Longford	305	863	247	111	-135	52	-31	-24	21	-13.5
Louth	321	894	375	87	-50	33	-60	37	-27	23.5
Mayo	373	1137	423	212	-157	86	-116	55	-30	40.0
Meath	195	766	234	80	-228	66	-80	-148	-14	-155.0
Monaghan	211	946	333	106	-55	49	-58	51	-9	46.5
Offaly	264	630	318	56	-84	83	-26	-28	57	0.5
Ros-common	190	634	279	43	-135	96	-60	-92	36	-74.0
Sligo	359	767	346	125	-91	103	-128	34	-25	21.5

CEB	No of Clients	Full Time Jobs in Clients	Other Time Jobs in Clients	Full Time Jobs Gains	Full Time Jobs Losses	Other Time Jobs Gains	Other Time Jobs Losses	Net Full Time Gains/ Losses	Net Other Time Gains/ Losses	Net Gains/ Losses (Full Time + (Other Time/ 2))
Tipperary (NR)	155	409	165	66	-161	29	-47	-95	-18	-104.0
Tipperary (SR)	255	854	381	96	-11	39	-6	85	33	101.5
Waterford City	257	569	205	82	-128	16	-41	-46	-25	-58.5
Waterford County	225	612	156	96	-116	17	-52	-20	-35	-37.5
West Meath	370	1126	320	166	-144	58	-98	22	-40	2.0
Wexford	306	1174	432	151	-150	125	-77	1	48	25.0
Wicklow	229	761	529	146	-94	285	-52	52	233	168.5
Grand Total	10920	32994	11482	4510	-4958	2955	-2296	-448	659	-118.5

Table 4: Net Jobs Created in CEB-assisted Companies

-	2007	2008	2009
Carlow	920.00	924.00	843.0
Cavan	1,067.00	1,075.50	947.0
Clare	1,555.00	1,496.50	1,417.5
Cork City	916.00	892.00	770.5
Cork North	461.50	462.00	387.0
Cork South	996.50	942.50	916.0
Cork West	689.50	643.50	571.0
Donegal	1,629.50	1,816.50	1,688.0
Dublin City	1,548.00	1,811.00	1,873.0
Fingal	991.50	1,061.00	1,050.0
South Dublin	990.50	954.00	855.5
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	776.50	851.00	807.0
Galway City & Co.	1,716.00	1,688.00	1,743.0
Kerry	981.00	1,089.00	1,170.50
Kildare	1,004.50	975.00	897.5
Kilkenny	784.50	782.50	664.0
Laois	953.00	848.50	656.0
Leitrim	396.00	368.50	300.5
Limerick City	946.00	682.50	590.5
Limerick Co.	922.50	890.00	842.0
Longford	788.50	787.00	745.0

-	2007	2008	2009
Louth	1,198.00	1,212.50	973.5
Mayo	1,295.00	1,314.50	1,223.0
Meath	1,064.50	1,026.00	908.0
Monaghan	1,061.50	912.00	873.5
Offaly	930.50	792.00	593.5
Roscommon	895.00	853.50	620.0
Sligo	756.50	788.00	735.0
Tipperary NR	574.50	519.50	413.0
Tipperary SR	809.50	783.50	655.5
Waterford City	832.00	809.50	662.0
Waterford Co	665.50	587.50	547.0
Westmeath	1,220.00	1,131.00	1,004.5
Wexford	1,405.50	1,252.00	1,076.0
Wicklow	804.00	789.00	707.5
Totals	34,545.50	33,811.00	30,726.50

S = South and East Region, B = BMW Region

Departmental Agencies

114. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if the Craft Council, which is under the auspices of his Department will be recognised as a cultural body in order to enable craft workers to be included under legislation governing the Arts Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19414/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Crafts Council of Ireland is the national design and economic development organisation for the crafts industry in Ireland fostering the sector's growth and commercial strength, communicating its unique identity and stimulating quality design, innovation and competitiveness. The Council's activities are substantially funded by my Department via Enterprise Ireland. The Crafts Council works closely with Enterprise Ireland to create and sustain jobs, and grow exports in the crafts sector.

Under Action 318 of the Action Plan for Jobs 2013, the Crafts Council will continue to increase the profile of the craft sector in Ireland through its involvement in a number of key initiatives which will seek to maximise the economic impact and job creation potential of investment in the sector. I am unaware of any proposals with regard to having the Crafts Council recognised as a cultural body. The Arts Council is a statutory body under the Arts Act 2003 and all matters relating to that body are the responsibility of my colleague, Deputy Jimmy Deenihan, the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Local Enterprise Offices Remit

115. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the reason the proposed LEOs are going to be less confusing for businesses; if the limit of 10 employees is maintained for the LEOs; if the LEOs will be able to engage with indigenous companies who employ more than 10 but do not export; if he will confirm that the new LEOs will have an independent evaluation committee based on independent business experts and

professionals who chair such committees; if he will explain the reason the current proposal to have county managers or their representatives chair such an expert committee is supportive of achieving economic development and job creation in view of the fact that it is not their area of expertise; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19465/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The CEB restructuring project is the first radical reform of the system for the delivery of State support to micro and small businesses since the establishment of the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs). This reform will bring about a new level of engagement and interaction at both national and local level in relation to enterprise support and stimulation and economic recovery and growth. The proposed reforms offer a huge opportunity to leverage the skills, resources and experience of the CEBs, Local Authorities and local business community to create a national approach to the sector allowing for seamless progression, innovative performance, streamlined delivery and increased employment.

The Centre of Excellence within Enterprise Ireland (EI) will be responsible for developing an improved environment for small and micro business and bringing this sector into the heart of national enterprise policy. It will build on the success of the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) by developing new thinking and best practice with regard to supports for small and micro business and ensuring their delivery. Some of the strengths and advantages that EI will bring to the LEOs are an enhanced insight to the opportunities for development of key and emerging sectors, clusters and networks; a back-stop of technical expertise to assist in the assessment of potential investment projects and access to a central reservoir of information, benchmarking programme performance and assessing international best practice. The LEOs will be the first-stop-shop through which all information on State supports for small and micro businesses can be accessed, and where businesses with clear high growth potential can be fast-tracked to the next level of support from EI.

As Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation I will retain responsibility for policy, and a key feature of this new structure will be the consistent application of policy across all LEOs, from the evaluation of applications for funding support, to the spending of budgets allocated. I will shortly be publishing a Framework Service Level Agreement that has been agreed between Enterprise Ireland and the Local Authorities which will form the basis within which LEOs will operate in delivering enterprise supports. This includes details on the creation of the Evaluation Committees that will be established. They will include representatives from Enterprise Ireland and a number of business representatives and entrepreneurs with specific business expertise. The decision to have the County Manager, or their representative, chair the committee is in line with their responsibility in the delivery of this service on behalf of Enterprise Ireland.

In addition to the publication of the SLA the national micro enterprise policy guidelines are currently being reviewed and developed and will outline how micro and small enterprises will be supported. The Deputy will be aware that I engaged in a full public consultation process and the valuable inputs received are currently helping to frame these guidelines. The current policy of supporting companies with less than ten employees that are involved in manufacturing and internationally traded services will be broadened to a situation where all micro and small businesses will be included in the first-stop-shop services of the LEO e.g. companies with greater than ten employees and those trading in the domestic market will be eligible for appropriate supports.

Local Enterprise Offices Establishment

116. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the way in which the proposal to maintain in excess of 30 LEOs meets the criteria of reducing

the number of quangos in the McCarthy report; the way in which the suggested structure of new enterprise offices based on local authorities reporting to county managers with a service level agreement with Enterprise Ireland, that is, adding the complexity of local authorities, does not in fact create another layer for businesses to deal with; if he will explain the way the proposed new structure and the reporting requirements within it are enterprise focused; and if he will outline the reason start up businesses should see why engaging with a local authority that sets and demands rates is a positive and innovative reform. [19467/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The CEB restructuring project is the first radical reform of the system for the delivery of State support to micro and small businesses since the establishment of the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs). This reform will bring about a new level of engagement and interaction at both national and local level in relation to enterprise support and economic recovery and growth. The proposed reforms offer a huge opportunity to leverage the skills and experience of the CEBs, Local Authorities and local business community to create a national approach to the sector allowing for seamless progression, innovative performance and increased employment.

The creation of a First-Stop-Shop at local level for the support of small and micro business will bring local enterprise support into an integrated national network of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) delivering enterprise policy to the highest standards, offering seamless progression for small business with potential to the existing national programmes run by Enterprise Ireland (EI). The LEOs will deliver the combined functions of CEBs and the Local Authority business support functions as well as developing an enhanced service to business at local level.

The new Micro Enterprise and Small Business Division in Enterprise Ireland will develop a world-class Centre of Excellence providing best-in-class support to entrepreneurs and small business in the execution of a national micro enterprise policy. The LEOs will report into this new Micro Enterprise and Small Business division.

The EI Centre of Excellence will be responsible for developing an improved environment for small and micro business and bringing this sector into the heart of national enterprise policy. It will build on the success of the CEBs by developing new thinking and best practice with regard to supports for small and micro business and ensuring their delivery. Some of the strengths and advantages that EI will display are an enhanced insight to the opportunities for development of key and emerging sectors, clusters and networks; a back-stop of technical expertise to assist in the assessment of potential investment projects and access to a central reservoir of information, benchmarking programme performance and assessing international best practice. The LEOs will have a close on going working and reporting relationship with EI in terms of design and deliver of appropriate national training and management development programmes and financial supports, management and monitoring of LEO metrics including the measurement of customer/entrepreneur experience/satisfaction, progressing LEO clients to the EI portfolio, preparation of Enterprise Development Plans for each LEO etc.

The current 35 separate Board structure will be dissolved – thereby removing much of the high level administrative requirements normally associated with Non Commercial State Sponsored Bodies and eliminating duplication or overlap arising from the individual Board structure - and their functions delivered by the Local Authority, through the LEO, on behalf of EI. The LEOs will form a stand-alone unit within the local authority structure and through Framework Service Level Agreement (SLA) between EI and the Local Authorities will be answerable to me as Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation for all enterprise policy and budgetary matters. I will shortly publish the SLA.

Local Authorities have worked with business to support investment and business develop-

ment at local level, and to the extent that it has been part of their remit hitherto, promoting and fostering entrepreneurship. They deliver essential services to business and can respond to the needs of local businesses speedily and efficiently, as well as advising on the requirements placed on business in relation to matters such as planning, building, fire and safety, business rates, and licensing.

Youth Guarantee

117. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to Focus Ireland's proposal to introduce a Youth Guarantee; if she will provide education, training and support for young persons experiencing homelessness; her views on whether it will save costs for the Exchequer; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19186/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The €100 rate of jobseeker's allowance was introduced for claimants aged under 20 in April 2009, and this rate was applied to claimants aged up to 21 from December 2009. A rate of €144 applies to claimants aged 22-24. The measures encourage young jobseekers to improve their skills and remain active in the labour market in order to avoid the risk of becoming long-term unemployed and will help them to progress into sustainable employment on a long-term basis. Where a person is in receipt of a rate of jobseeker's allowance described above and he or she participates in a course of education, training, Community Employment, Rural Social Scheme or Tús, a higher rate of €160 applies.

I understand that the Deputy has been contacted with regard to these measures by Focus Ireland. My officials are in contact with Focus Ireland in relation to their concerns. While the primary issue in this regard is a housing issue rather than one of income support, the Department will continue to engage with Focus Ireland and to seek a viable solution.

In relation to a Youth Guarantee, under my chairmanship, the Council of Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Ministers (EPSCO) last month agreed a recommendation on an EU-wide Youth Guarantee. The EPSCO Recommendation is that each Member State should ensure that young people receive a quality offer of employment or of continued education, an apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed. The Recommendation will now move to be considered for formal adoption by the Council at a later stage in Ireland's Presidency - most likely in May.

The scale and nature of the measures required will depend on the trend in youth unemployment, and in particular the number of young people likely to experience periods of unemployment of more than four months under current policies. In this context, it is a welcome development that the official labour market figures published by the CSO recently indicated that the number of young unemployed at the end of 2012, at 59,000, a reduction of almost 9,000 on the same time a year earlier. It is to be hoped that this is the beginning of a sustained downward movement in youth unemployment as the economy recovers. Even so, the implementation of a guarantee will, almost certainly require an expansion in the range of opportunities currently on offer to young people in the form of further education, training, internships, subsidised private-sector recruitment, and supports for self-employment.

Home Care Packages

118. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a home care package payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19438/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This is a matter for my colleague in the Department of Health.

Respite Care Grant

119. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will reverse the 19% cut to the respite care grant and actively support the campaign by carers to give carer's a break [19487/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The contribution that people provide in caring for members of their own family is critical for society. It was for that reason that the Government last year adopted the National Carers' Strategy with a view to giving greater public recognition to carers and their work.

Carers receive significant income supports from the Department of Social Protection so that people can continue living at home as far as possible. Expenditure on carers has increased significantly in recent years. In 2013 it is estimated to be €776 million compared with an estimated outturn of €771 million in 2012. The expenditure on carers in 2012 included: €509 million on carer's allowance; €24 million on carer's benefit; €135 million on the respite care grant and; €103 million on domiciliary care allowance. Carers also receive a free travel pass at an annual cost of €6 million and carers who reside with the care recipient are eligible for the household benefits package at an annual cost of approximately €30 million.

I am not in a position to reverse the reduction to the respite care grant. The revised rate of €1,375 will still be more than what it was in 2006 when the rate was €1,200. The respite care grant is paid to more than 70,000 people each year, with some 5,000 people in receipt of more than one grant as they care for more than one person. Almost 54,000 people are in receipt of the carer's allowance and 27,000 in receipt of the domiciliary care allowance. There are also 1,700 in receipt of carer's benefit. Some 5,000 carers not in receipt of a carer's payment also receive the grant.

The supports available to carers in Ireland are among the highest rates of income support in Europe. A person getting certain qualifying payments and also providing full-time care and attention to another person can keep their main social welfare payment and receive a half-rate carer's allowance as well. The half-rate carer's allowance was protected in Budget 2013. The respite care grant is available to all full-time carers regardless of their means while the income disregard and means test for carers allowance is the most generous in the social welfare system. A couple under 66 with two children, earning a joint annual income of up to €35,400 can qualify for the maximum rate of carer's allowance while a couple earning €59,300 will still qualify for the minimum rate. Carers are entitled to an extra half-rate carer's allowance if they care for more than one person and a respite care grant for each care recipient.

Child Benefit Policy

120. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans for the future of child benefit;; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19154/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Child benefit is a universal payment that assists parents with the cost of raising children and it contributes towards alleviating child poverty. The estimated expenditure on child benefit in 2013 is around €1.9 billion and it is currently paid to around 611,000 families in respect of some 1.16 million children. In line with a commitment in the Programme for Government I established an Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare, tasked with recommending cost-effective solutions as to how employment

disincentives can be improved and better poverty outcomes can be achieved. The first report of the Group, examining child and family income supports was published in February.

This report makes important recommendations on how child benefit could be maintained as a universal payment while reforming the system of child and family income supports so as to better target those who need these supports most. There was a strong preference in the Group for an approach based on a two-tier child and family income support payment which would encourage work participation and allow for better flexibility in the targeting of support for different family types.

Given the range of complex issues involved, the Government has made no decision at this time on the core recommendations of the report. It is intended that the report will now contribute to a wider policy debate on the matter. In considering the proposals to reform child and family income support payments, including the balance between income supports and services, I expect that Government will also take into account further work by the Advisory Group on the issue of social protection and taxation supports for working age persons and more general developments in the budgetary and fiscal situation.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

121. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection the situation regarding a carers allowance application in respect of a person (details provided) details supplied in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19170/13]

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 12 March 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.

Ministerial Travel

122. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will report on her visit to Chicago; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18695/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The St Patrick's Day period offers an unparalleled opportunity to showcase Ireland abroad, promote our political and economic interests, and demonstrate our strengths as a location for trade and investment. As part of the Government's St Patrick's Day "Promote Ireland" programme, I travelled to Milwaukee and Chicago to meet with political, business and civic leaders and organisations and undertook a wide-ranging series of engagements. In Milwaukee on Thursday March 14, among other engagements, I met with the Mayor of Milwaukee, Mr Tom Barrett; members of the Milwaukee Irish Fest, which promotes and celebrates Irish culture; and the Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation, which educates and mentors owners of small and micro-businesses in Wisconsin, with a specific focus on women, minorities and those on low-incomes. In the same vein, I met with BizStarts Milwaukee, an organisation which seeks to nurture and connect entrepreneurs and foster new businesses. I also met with Dr Anthony Pennington Cross, Professor of Finance at Marquette University, to discuss the issue of distressed mortgages.

In Chicago, from Friday March 15 to Monday March 18 inclusive, I met with the Mayor of

Chicago, Mr Rahm Emanuel, attended the St Patrick's Day Mass in St Patrick's Old Cathedral, and attended the Chicago St Patrick's Day Parade. I also attended events hosted by the Irish American Partnership, the Celtic Legal Society of Chicago, and the Irish Fellowship Club of Chicago. I met with groups seeking reform of the US immigration system, namely the Chicago Celts for Immigration Reform and the Chicago Irish Immigrant Support Organisation, to update them on the Government's continuing work in this area.

I visited the Irish American Heritage Centre and Gaelic Park, and met with members of the Southside Irish community. I met with the Educare Early Schooling Programme and After School Matters organisation to discuss childcare and child welfare issues. I also met with members of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, and took the opportunity to brief the members on economic progress being made in Ireland, and hear from them on the US economic outlook. Finally, I met with a number of members of the media during the course of my visit, including the editorial board of the Chicago Tribune, to discuss the Government's progress in returning Ireland to economic stability.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

123. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will review a jobseeker's allowance granted to a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19176/13]

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 1 March 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.

One-Parent Family Payment Applications

124. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for social welfare in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19177/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned applied for One-Parent Family Payment on 11 April 2013. The application is currently with a Social Welfare Inspector for investigation and she will be notified of the outcome as soon as possible.

Homeless Persons Supports

125. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the action is being taken by her Department to provide assistance to young persons who are homeless to ensure they do not become trapped in emergency accommodation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19184/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The €100 rate of jobseeker's allowance was introduced for claimants aged under 20 in April 2009, and this rate was applied to claimants aged up to 21 from December 2009. A rate of €144 applies to claimants aged 22-24. The measures encourage young jobseekers to improve their skills and remain active in the

labour market in order to avoid the risk of becoming long-term unemployed and will help them to progress into sustainable employment on a long-term basis. Where a person is in receipt of a rate of jobseeker's allowance described above and he or she participates in a course of education, training, Community Employment, Rural Social Scheme or Tús, a higher rate of €160 applies.

I understand that the Deputy has been contacted with regard to these measures by Focus Ireland. My officials are in contact with Focus Ireland in relation to their concerns. While the primary issue in this regard is a housing issue rather than one of income support, my Department will continue to engage with Focus Ireland and to seek a viable solution. More generally, the Deputy may wish to note that my Department's role with regard to persons who are homeless is mainly income maintenance. Under the social welfare system, homeless people have entitlements to the full range of social welfare schemes, including supplementary welfare allowance and associated supplements, subject to the normal qualifying conditions.

Mortgage Resolution Processes

126. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will consider widening the pool of reference related to social welfare recipients in mortgage arrears to include experienced financial brokers and not solely accountants as currently proposed by her; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19194/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Mortgage Arrears Information and Advice Service was established to provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach 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 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 is 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. This panel is available on a county by county basis on the website www.keepingyourhome.ie.

When a lender is proposing a longer-term mortgage resolution, the lender advises the borrower to obtain independent financial advice on the proposed arrangement and that, if the borrower wishes to avail of this option, that the lender will pay €250 to an accountant of the borrower's choosing for the provision of this advice. The advisory framework has commenced with practising accountants because they already operate within a regulatory regime which includes qualitative oversight by their regulating bodies and in these circumstances it was possible to establish the advisory framework for people with mortgage distress within a relatively short timeframe.

There is nothing to inhibit other financial intermediaries from continuing to give advice on mortgages as required by borrowers. The advisory framework is being monitored on an on-going basis and a full review of the service will be undertaken in June 2013. The review will be undertaken to ensure that it is meeting its objectives and will encompass all aspects of the service including if participation is extended to other interested parties, the criteria that would be required in terms of relevant qualifications, experience, independence, professional indemnity insurance, etc. All relevant stakeholders will have an opportunity to input to the review.

Departmental Expenditure

127. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection if any of her Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19221/13]

128. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide the month by month profile for her Department's 2013 capital expenditure; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19237/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 127 and 128 together.

The Department of Social Protection's capital allocation for 2012 was not used for current expenditure purposes in 2012. The table below details the monthly profile of the 2013 Capital Allocation for the Department of Social Protection. The total capital allocation provided for in the 2013 REV published last week is €10.5m. There is also provision in the REV for the carry-over of €1.050m, which was unspent in 2012. It is proposed that €5m of this allocation will be used to cover the purchase of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment, such as computer hardware and software, desktop and other infrastructural equipment. €5.1m of the allocation will be used to provide for the costs of new buildings and the refurbishment of other buildings. The carryover of €1.05m has also been assigned to this subhead. A major portion of this allocation will be used for the continued roll-out of the Intreo service. To date 12 offices are now providing the full Intreo service and it is expected that a total of 43 offices will be delivering the Intreo service by the end of 2013. The remainder of the allocation (€0.4m) has been allocated to the e-Government projects which have a public sector wide impact such as the continued roll-out of the Public Service Card.

The cumulative profile to the end of March 2013 was €697,400 of which €650,000 has been expended.

-	2013 Capital Allocation	Capital Carryover
Jan	138,400	
Feb	210,000	
Mar	349,000	
Apr	320,000	1,050,000
May	1,307,000	
Jun	2,290,000	
Jul	402,500	
Aug	368,000	
Sep	2,085,000	
Oct	521,000	
Nov	535,000	
Dec	1,974,100	
Totals	10,500,000	1,050,000

Question No. 129 withdrawn.

International Agreements

130. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection if there is a

mutual tax/social welfare agreement between Ireland and Canada which would allow a returning emigrant to have a disability payment being paid to them in Ontario, Canada, to be paid in Ireland where they have family who can help support them with their disablement or if he will be entitled to an Irish social welfare payment if he returned home, having worked in Ireland until 1975 and is 61 years of age. [19298/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A bilateral Social Security Agreement between Ireland and Canada came into force on 1 January 1992, (Statutory Instrument No. 317 of 1991). The main purpose of the Agreement is to protect the pension rights of people who have worked in Ireland and who have worked or resided in Canada. The pension payments covered in the act are, old age (contributory) pensions, retirement pensions, invalidity pensions, widows (contributory) pensions.

One of the provisions of this agreement is that certain payments payable by the authorities in one country, can be paid even if the person concerned lives in the other country. Without more information on the payment that this person is receiving in Canada, I cannot give a definite answer as to his entitlement to have it paid by the Canadian authorities if he moves to Ireland, but I can confirm that some disability payments can be made under this arrangement. In addition, if a person is not entitled to the payment of a benefit because he or she has not completed sufficient reckonable periods in Ireland alone, the bilateral agreement allows for the contributions from Canada to be combined with Irish contributions. The person's entitlement to benefit shall be determined on the basis of the totalised periods in accordance with the relevant statutory contribution conditions provided for under the legislation of Ireland.

Finally, if the person does not qualify under either of the above arrangements, if he returns to Ireland it would be open to him to apply for a non-contributory Disability Allowance, which is means tested and subject to the habitual residence condition (HRC). Each case is determined on its own merits, and I do not have sufficient information on the circumstances of the individual in question to give a view on whether he would qualify for Disability Allowance.

Question No. 131 withdrawn.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

132. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason rent supplement was suspended in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; if all documentation has been received in this instances; if she will outline when payment will be reinstated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19319/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Rent Supplement was suspended as the person's primary payment was suspended. As this suspension has now been lifted Rent Supplement is back in payment.

Disability Allowance Appeals

133. **Deputy John Perry** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress that was made on a persons disability allowance appeal (details supplied) in County Sligo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19321/13]

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 27

February 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

134. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the maximum rent allowance to avail of rent support in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; if all arrears of rent support are up to date in this instance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19323/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The maximum rent limit for the person concerned is €690 per month. Arrears are due to issue this week together with this month's payment.

Questions Nos. 135 to 137, inclusive, withdrawn.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

138. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 646 of 17 April 2013, if she will clarify a person's eligibility for rent allowance in a situation in which has left their home which is jointly owned/rented with their spouse/partner; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19345/13]

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 approximately 86,000 rent supplement recipients for which the Government has provided €403 million for 2013. 646 of 17 April 2013, I outlined the eligibility criteria for rent supplement. The question referred to the provisions to support women who are leaving the family home due to domestic violence. In such cases the circumstances of the applicant are examined and the officer administering the scheme has discretionary power to expedite the award of a payment where the person's safety and wellbeing are at risk. If the Deputy has concerns regarding a specific case, he should forward the details to the Department for follow up.

Question No. 139 withdrawn.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

140. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for invalidity pension (details supplied) [19377/13]

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

office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 2 April 2013, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

141. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide an update on an appeal for invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick and a time frame as to when a decision will be made; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19378/13]

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 2 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. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 13 April 2013 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. While every effort is being made to deal with the large numbers awaiting a decision on their appeals, it is not possible to give an approximate date when a decision will be issued. In order to be fair to all appellants, they are dealt with in strict chronological order. 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 Benefits Applications

142. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of applications for various social welfare payments such as disability benefit, disability allowance, invalidity pension or other means-tested or health-related payments which have been refused the decision upheld on appeal and subsequently granted on foot of a new application in each of the past three years to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19389/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The information requested by the Deputy is not collated by my Department. However I include, for the Deputy's information, a table detailing the number of means-tested or health-related payments that have been awarded during 2010, 2011, 2012 and up to 31 March 2013.

Health Related and Means Assessed Schemes Awarded

Allowances	2010	2011	2012	31 March 2013
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	7,191	5,730	7,243	1,666
Jobseeker's Allowance	191,144	174,491	167,623	39,911
One-Parent Family Payment	12,127	12,178	11,151	2,600

Allowances	2010	2011	2012	31 March 2013
Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Non-Contributory Pension	533	377	287	40
Disability Allowance	8,306	9,246	10,400	2,394
Blind Pension	117	106	96	23
Carer's Allowance	8,769	7,465	9,880	5,685
Domiciliary Care Allowance	3,103	2,686	1,586	383
Respite Care Grant	5,486	4,965	4,575	382
Illness Benefit	249,166	259,008	245,319	70,974
Interim Illness Benefit/Occupational Injury	12,289	11,616	10,927	2,940
Invalidity Pension	3,597	2,657	6,352	2,405
Disablement Pension	1,293	1,310	1,384	242
Carer's Benefit	1,965	1,941	2,021	394
Family Income Supplement - New Claims	14,328	13,631	13,264	7,236
Family Income Supplement - Claim Renewals	22,101	23,787	28,118	10,268
Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)	106	117	95	20

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

143. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 667 of 16 April 2013 if she will indicate if in the determination of means, specific regard was had for persons liabilities in the form of outstanding liabilities to revenue, arrears of mortgage and lack of any income whatsoever; if the totality of any means assessed against them exceeded such liabilities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19390/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is in receipt of a jobseeker's allowance payment. The means assessment is subject to the legislative provisions of that scheme. It is open to the person concerned to appeal the decision or if there are any changes in his circumstances he can request a review of his means.

Social Welfare Benefits Applications

144. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of applications for disability allowance/invalidity pension approved on application, refused on application and/or subsequently awarded and/or approved on appeal in each of the past three years to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19391/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The information requested by the Deputy is contained in the following tabular statement.

Disability Allowance

-	Registered	Awarded on Application	Refused on Application	Withdrawn by Applicant	Pending	Awarded/Approved on Appeal
2010	21,409	8,306	10,316	626	6,880	1,951
2011	24,264	9,246	14,116	783	6,999	2,457
2012	25,887	10,400	14,519	1,240	7,775	2,939
31 March 2013	5,034	2,394	4,015	265	6,834	913

Invalidity Pension

-	Registered	Awarded on Application	Refused on Application	Withdrawn by Applicant	Pending	Awarded/Approved on Appeal
2010	8,774	3,597	3,677	285	2,701	532
2011*	14,621	2,657	5,945	1,699	6,814	759
2012	11,510	6,352	10,721	702	3,662	1,509
31 March 2013	2,453	2,405	2,588	342	2,627	1,897

*Due to scheme migrating to a new processing system statistics were not accurately reported for the first quarter 2011.

Social Welfare Appeals Waiting Times

145. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the average length of time taken to process appeals for means-tested or health-related social welfare payments in each of the past three years to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19392/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The average time taken to process appeals for means-tested or health-related social welfare payments in each of the past three years to date is given in the following Table. These processing times are calculated from the registration date of the appeal to the date of its finalisation. They include all activities during this period including time spent in the Department for comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal put forward by the appellant, and any further investigation, examination or assessment by the Department's Inspectors and Medical Assessors that is deemed necessary. A considerable period of time is added to the process when an oral hearing is required because of the logistics involved in this process. By its nature and because it is a quasi-judicial nature, the processing of appeals takes time even at the best of times and reflects the fact that, by definition,

the appeal process cannot be a quick one.

Table: Average Processing Times of Appeals 2010-2012

SCHEME	2010	2010	2011	2011	2012	2012
-	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Blind Pension	19.8	39.4	20.4	69.8	24.4	34.7
Carers Allowance	26.9	47.3	31.3	57.9	33.5	42.5
Carers Benefit	21.6	44.2	21.8	59.4	27.3	35.3
Disability Allowance	30.8	51.1	27.4	55.6	34.2	40.6
Illness Benefit	39.2	56.4	38.2	59.8	41.9	50.3
Domiciliary Care	26.8	49.1	25.4	55.8	32.5	41.4
Farm Assist	23.2	50.7	20.9	57.9	23.4	44.9
Bereavement Grant	25.1	-	22.1	-	29.0	-
Family Income Supplement	21.4	29.0	19.9	31.8	22.8	31.2
Invalidity Pension	40.9	59.7	36.4	58.9	38.8	48.7
One Parent Family Payment	30.2	49.4	24.3	57.5	29.4	44.6
Maternity Benefit	37.7	-	25.1	62.1	30.8	41.7
State Pension (Non-Con)	26.5	49.9	20.6	54.6	27.7	51.1
Occupational Injury Benefit	55.7	53.8	30.7	54.8	19.5	66.9
Occupational Injury Benefit (Medical)	32.5	67.9	77.8	65.0	78.7	87.4
Disablement Pension	27.4	51.9	48.0	59.7	35.7	46.0
Incapacity Supplement	-	30.7	-	48.3	14.2	48.8
Guardian's Payment (Non-con)	24.3	42.2	23.9	59.0	32.0	58.8
Pre-Retirement Allowance	-	-	-	-	54.6	-
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	22.2	46.9	18.0	54.8	22.8	38.2
Jobseeker's Allowance	23.6	43.0	23.8	47.9	24.4	34.4
Respite Care Grant	30.5	49.1	23.4	60.8	28.5	37.3

Supplementary Welfare Allowance	6.9	14.8	6.3	17.6	17.6	22.9
Treatment Benefits	21.9	57.8	28.8	-	19.0	-
Survivor's Pension (Non-con)	31.9	54.6	18.1	53.1	30.9	39.1
Widows Parent Grant	20.9	-	22.0	-	23.2	-

Social Welfare Benefits Applications

146. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of applications for health-related social welfare payments approved on application or referred to appeal in each of the past three years to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19393/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): All applications for Social Welfare payments are considered on the merits of the information supplied by the applicant. In the event of an application failing to satisfy the eligibility criteria for the scheme the applicant is so advised and informed of their right to lodge an appeal of the decision with the Social Welfare Appeals Office. Included in this reply is a breakdown by scheme of all awarded claims (Table 1) and appeals registered (Table 2) in respect of health-related social welfare payments for the period 2010 to 31 March 2013.

Table 1 - Health Related and Means Assessed Schemes Awarded on Application

-	2010	2011	2012	31 March 2013
Disability Allowance	8,306	9,246	10,400	2,394
Blind Pension	117	106	96	23
Carer's Allowance	8,769	7,465	9,880	5,685
Domiciliary Care Allowance	3,103	2,686	1,586	383
Respite Care Grant	5,486	4,965	4,575	382
Illness Benefit	249,166	259,008	245,319	70,974
Interim Illness Benefit/Occupational Injury	12,289	11,616	10,927	2,940
Invalidity Pension	3,597	2,657	6,352	2,405
Disablement Pension	1,293	1,310	1,384	242
Carer's Benefit	1,965	1,941	2,021	394
Incapacity Supplement	-	-	-	Claim activity is not collated in respect of this scheme.

-	2010	2011	2012	31 March 2013
*Partial Capacity Benefit	-	-	-	Claim activity is not collated in respect of this scheme.

*Scheme commenced Feb 2012.

Table 2 - Health Related and Means Assessed Schemes Appeals Registered

-	2010	2011	2012	31 March 2013
Disability Allowance	4,840	5,472	6,223	1,508
Blind Pension	14	21	27	5
Carer's Allowance	3,025	2,199	2,676	1,052
Domiciliary Care Allowance	1,858	2,401	2,186	281
Respite Care Grant	162	303	278	59
Illness Benefit	5,471	3,657	2,647	564
Interim Illness Benefit/Occupational Injury	44	21	19	4
Invalidity Pension	1,024	2,285	4,765	1,332
Disablement Pension	342	263	409	88
Carer's Benefit	182	160	183	28
Incapacity Supplement	15	6	21	-
*Partial Capacity Benefit	-	-	67	22

*Scheme commenced Feb 2012.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Application Numbers

147. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of applications for domiciliary care allowance received in each of the past five years to date; the number approved, rejected or pending; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19394/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department has been accepting new claims for DCA since 1 April 2009. Statistics relating to the allowance for the period prior to April 2009 are a matter for the HSE, the previous administrators of the scheme. The number of applicants for DCA that were received, awarded and refused from April 2009 to December 2012 is set out in the table.

Domiciliary Care Allowance applications – 2009 to 2012

-	Applications received	Applications processed in year	Applications allowed*	Applications disallowed
2009 (from 1st April)	3,389	2,823	1,220 (43%)	1,603
2010	5,457	5,333	2,576 (48%)	2,757
2011	5,525	5,396	2502 (46%)	2,894
2012	4,339	4,680	2204 (47%)	2,476

*including on review following receipt of additional information.

There were 639 DCA applications pending as of 31st March 2013.

Social Welfare Benefits Applications

148. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of applications for rent allowance refused or reduced in each of the past two years to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19395/13]

149. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of mortgage interest supplement in each of the past two years to date; the number who have had reductions in this payment in the period in question for whatever reason; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19396/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 148 and 149 together.

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. There are currently approximately 86,000 rent supplement recipients for which the Government has provided over €403 million for 2013. Mortgage interest supplement provides short-term income support to eligible people who are unable to meet their mortgage interest repayments in respect of a house which is their sole place of residence. There are approximately 13,000 mortgage interest supplement recipients for which the Government has provided some €42 million for 2013. Statistics are not available on the number of applications for rent or mortgage interest supplement refused or reduced in each of the past two years to date.

Following Budget 2012 all recipients of rent supplement and mortgage interest supplement experienced a reduction in their payment following the increase of the minimum contribution paid by recipients towards their accommodation costs, which came into effect from January 2012. The minimum contribution increased from €24 to €30 for a single adult household and to €35 for a couple.

The following tabular statement shows the number of rent supplement and mortgage interest supplement recipients at end 2011 and 2012 and to end March 2013.

Number of rent supplement and mortgage interest supplement recipients

Year	Rent Supplement	Mortgage Interest Supplement
2011	96,803	18,988

Year	Rent Supplement	Mortgage Interest Supplement
2012	87,684	14,597
2013 – End March	86,375	13,413

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

150. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will consider increasing rent support for recipients living in areas affected by higher rent markets; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19397/13]

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 approximately 86,000 rent supplement recipients for which the Government has provided over €403 million for 2013. 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.

A review of the maximum rent limits is currently underway and will be completed by June 2013. Analysis of recent reports has shown that rents have increased in some urban areas with rental asking rates falling in others. Any changes to the existing limits will be considered as part of this review.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

151. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons who have given up employment to care for a relative and who have subsequently been awarded State pension-related credits over the past four years to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19398/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I can confirm that the Department does not hold records of those persons who have given up work entirely in order to care for someone nor does it hold records as to whether the carer is related to the care recipient.

Social Welfare Overpayments

152. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of overpayments of a social welfare payment and or allowance wherein the overpayment that occurred was not the fault of the applicant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19399/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): My Department categorises overpayments as fraud, non-fraud and estate cases. Fraud cases arise mainly on foot of false declarations by customers concerning their employment, income or family status. Non-fraud cases include those attributed to customer/third party error and those that are considered Departmental error. Estate cases arise where undisclosed means by customers come to light after their deaths.

The Department is currently not in a position to publicly comment on overpayments recorded in 2012 as these figures form part of the statutory accounts of the Department and are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General. However in 2011, there were a total of 63,310 overpayments amounting to €92.4m. Of these, a total of 6,062 overpayments, amounting to €5.5m were the result of Departmental error. This represents less than 6% of the total value of overpayments raised in 2011 and equates to approximately 0.03% of total scheme expenditure.

My Department endeavours to seek the maximum level of repayments from customers in order to encourage prompt repayment of all debts. My Department is fully committed to recovering 100% of all overpayments and they remain on a customer's record until fully recovered.

Employment Support Services

153. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons currently on community related training, employment or education schemes and supported by her Department in each of the past two years to date; the extent to which she expects the maximum number of places to remain available in the current year with particular reference to efforts to alleviate youth unemployment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19400/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The following table details the number of beneficiaries for each programme and this number includes those on the programme (at year-end) and those who left during that year after benefitting from a placement. The March figures are year-to-date.

Programme	2011	2012	Current (March '13)
Community Employment	34,629	33,232	25,070
Job Initiative (Closed to recruitment)	1,310	1,256	1,239
Rural Social Scheme	2,803	2,861	2,756
Tús	2,332	7,227	6,306
Community Services Programme	2,148	2,112	2,086
Totals	43,222	46,688	37,457

Source: MIR Annual Report 2012 & Pobal

The following table details the current number of places on each programme as of month-end March 2013.

Programme	Current Places (March '13)
Community Employment	22,550
Job Initiative (Closed to recruitment)	1,170
Rural Social Scheme	2,703
Tús	5,107
Community Services Programme	2,078
Totals	33,608

Source: MIR Report March 2013

With specific reference to youth unemployment policies, the Department's efforts in this area have already been outlined in response to PQ number 19401-13 from Deputy Durkan. The Department is committed to the continuing improvement of its employment programmes to ensure value for money, progression of the job seeker and support for communities.

Youth Unemployment Measures

154. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the specific arrangements she has put in place to address the issue of youth unemployment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19401/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Young people, typically, suffer disproportionately from job losses in recessions as they tend to have entered employment more recently, are more likely to hold temporary contracts and to be employed in cyclically sensitive industries than older workers. There were 68,000 young unemployed, on average, in 2012, made up of 18,500 aged 15-19 and 49,500 aged 20-24. Overall, the under-25 age group had an unemployment rate of 30% (40% for 15-19 year-olds and 28% for 20-24 year-olds). This compares to an unemployment rate of 13.5% for prime age workers (ages 25-54). Of particular concern is the continued increase in the share of youth unemployed who are out of work for more than one year. They now account for almost half of all unemployed youth (47%). In this context, it is a welcome development that the most recent official labour market figures indicated that the number of young unemployed at the end of 2012, at 59,000, showed a reduction of almost 9,000 on the same time a year earlier. It is to be hoped that this is the beginning of a sustained downward movement in youth unemployment as the economy recovers.

The Government's primary strategy to tackle youth unemployment is to create the environment for a strong economic recovery by promoting competitiveness and productivity. Economic recovery will underpin jobs growth. Past experience suggests that youth unemployment, which tends to rise relatively rapidly in a downturn, can be expected to fall relatively rapidly during the recovery.

In addition to promoting economic recovery, the Government recognises the need for interim measures to support the young unemployed and keep young jobseekers close to the labour market. There are five main approaches being taken to tackle youth unemployment: education, training, job search assistance/guidance, work experience, and encouraging job creation. These actions range across a number of Departments and Agencies.

In terms of education, the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) scheme run by my Department provides income maintenance for unemployed people returning to further or higher education. Over 6,500 young people participated in the BTEA in the last academic year. MOMENTUM, a new Department of Education and Skills initiative, launched in 2013, has a specific youth component. MOMENTUM will support the provision of free education and training projects to allow 6,500 jobseekers (who are unemployed for 12 months or more) to gain skills and to access work opportunities in identified growing sectors. MOMENTUM consists of four themes, of which theme 4 is dedicated to under 25s.

In terms of training, approximately 12,000 persons aged under 25 completed a training course with FÁS in 2012 (excluding apprenticeships and evening courses). Training allowances on eligible courses exceed what a young person would receive in jobseekers' payments, providing an incentive to take up training programmes. Training courses relevant to the individual job-seeker's needs are available to all young unemployed.

In terms of job-search assistance, some 25,500 young people registered with Employment Services in 2012, representing 36% of all new registrants. Registering with Employment Services gives job-seekers access to guidance interviews, job search assistance, and training courses, as well as self-service job-seeking options.

Under the National Employment Action Plan (EAP) persons between the ages of 18 and 65 years who are approaching 3 months on the Live Register are identified by the Department of Social Protection and referred to Employment Services for interview with the aim of assisting them to enter/re-enter the labour market. In 2012, there were some 33,000 referrals of under 25s to the EAP, affecting approximately 26,000 individual jobseekers (those who do not attend initially are referred again). Of those referred, 68% of clients had signed off the Live Register by the end of the year. The EAP referral process is currently being replaced, under Intreo, by referral of all unemployed persons to group engagement sessions immediately on entering the Live Register, followed by immediate one-to-one interviews for those profiled as most likely to remain unemployed for longer periods.

There are a number of schemes/programmes available that are focussed on work experience. The most relevant for young people is JobBridge (the National Internship Scheme). Over 1,500 young people are currently participating on these schemes. The total number of placements of young people on JobBridge during 2012 was 2,700.

In the December Budget, funding was secured for an additional 10,000 places this year across a range of programmes -- including JobBridge, TÚS and Community Employment. About a quarter of these places will be earmarked to be taken up by unemployed young people.

Long-term unemployed youth will benefit from the JobsPlus initiative which is designed to encourage employers to recruit long-term unemployed people. Under this scheme the State will pay circa €1 of every €4 it costs the employer to recruit a person off the Live Register. Given that young people normally benefit most when employers start hiring, they are likely to be particular beneficiaries of this initiative.

Finally the European Commission has proposed a Council Recommendation on a European-wide approach to a "youth guarantee. The Council Recommendation -- which received political agreement from EU employment ministers in February and is expected to be formally adopted this month -- recommends that each Member State should ensure that young people receive a quality offer of employment or of continued education, an apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed.

While Member States are encouraged to implement the Recommendation as soon as possible, it is recognised that implementation will need to be more gradual in countries with higher levels of youth unemployment and particularly severe budgetary problems. The government will review the current range of youth employment and training policies in Ireland to assess what measures will need to be taken to commence the gradual implementation of the guarantee. This will include the identification of what would be the appropriate timescale for implementation in Ireland's current employment and budgetary circumstances.

Unemployment Levels

155. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the arrangements she has put in place to address the issue of long-term unemployment; the extent to which she expects such measures to impact on the live register in the current year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19402/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The unemployment rate is currently 14.0% and while it has begun to fall after several years of increases, the rate remains unacceptably high. It is of additional concern that long-term unemployment (defined as being unemployed for a year or more) accounted for 60% (176,500) of total unemployment in Q4 2012, and for almost half of all unemployment among young people.

In the first instance, the Government's primary strategy to tackle long-term unemployment is to create the environment for a strong economy recovery by promoting competitiveness and productivity through the Action Plan for Jobs. Economic recovery will underpin jobs growth and thus reduce unemployment and long-term unemployment.

In addition to promoting economic recovery, the Government recognises the need for measures to support the long-term unemployed and keep jobseekers close to the labour market. Past experience suggests that, without such measures, long-term unemployment may fall more slowly than overall unemployment when strong economic growth returns.

Given the scale of the unemployment crisis, the key objective of labour market policy is to keep those on the Live Register close to the labour market and prevent the drift into long-term unemployment. Persons from the Live Register availing of activation measures will get an opportunity to engage in employment, training and work experience and so be in a position to avail of employment opportunities as the economy improves. As such, the policy objective is to prioritise scarce resources on those on the Live Register so as to increase their chances of leaving it thereby ensuring a reduction in Exchequer costs over time.

In this context, the major elements of the Government's response are set out in the **Pathways to Work** policy which is aimed at ensuring that as many as possible of the job vacancies that are created are filled by people from the Live Register, with a particular focus on those who are long term unemployed or at risk of long-term unemployment.

The Pathways to Work policy and the establishment of the new integrated INTREO service will transform the nature and level of engagement between our employment and income support services and the unemployed. The policy is underpinned by five core strands which reflect the new integrated employment and income support services which are currently being established. Each of these strands places the customer at the centre of all the service's activities, recognising their individual and specific needs. The strands provide for:

- Transforming and reforming the employment and income support services institutions to deliver better services to the unemployed through an integrated approach.

- More regular and on-going engagement with people who are unemployed through active case management and profiling. There were almost 130,000 referrals of unemployed welfare recipients to the employment service in 2012.

- Greater targeting of activation places and opportunities by providing for over 85,000 places on initiatives such as Job Bridge – the National Internship Scheme, Tús, the Rural Social Scheme and the Jobs Initiative.

- Incentivising the take up of opportunities by the unemployed.

- Creating and enhancing relations with employers through incentivising the provision of opportunities for people who are unemployed. A major initiative planned for 2013 will be JobPlus, which will streamline the existing Revenue Job Assist and Employer PRSI schemes into a single easy to administer scheme that offers an attractive incentive to employers recruiting people who are long-term unemployed.

The Pathways to Work policy sets very ambitious targets for the long-term unemployed to be achieved over the next three years.

- To ensure that 75,000 of those long term unemployed in 2012 will move into employment

by 2015.

- To reduce the average time spent on the live register from 21 months to less than 12 months.
- To ensure that employers have access to and are offered suitable candidate to fill full time vacancies and that the proportion of vacancies filled by the Department's employment services from the Live Register is at least to 40% by 2015.
- To ensure that each person in receipt of a jobseeker payment fulfils their personal responsibility to engage fully with the employment and training supports provided by the State as a pre-condition for receipt of their welfare payments.

In addition to the initiatives announced under the Pathways to Work programme, the Department also manages a number of schemes providing temporary employment for the long-term unemployed on works and services of value to the community. There are currently 26,000 people participating on Community Employment and Tús. As part of Budget 2013, the Government approved 10,000 new places across CE, TÚS, JobBridge and a new social employment scheme with the Local Authorities.

The Department also supports long-term unemployed people who create jobs through self-employment. Currently, about 12,000 people are being supported under the Back to Work Allowance scheme and the Short-term Enterprise Allowance scheme.

Education & Training

The Department of Social Protection also provides income support for long-term unemployed persons returning to education via Back to Education Allowance and the Springboard Scheme. There are almost 26,000 participants in receipt of Back to Education Allowance in the current academic year. Springboard offers a choice of free courses in higher education from certificate, to degree, to post-graduate level. All courses lead to qualifications in enterprise sectors which are growing and need skilled personnel. Participants on Springboard courses retain their social welfare payments. Sixty-per cent of Springboard participants have been unemployed for more than twelve months and one third of those for more than 24 months. Over 3,500 people graduated from the first round of Springboard programmes, which were put in place in 2011, and an additional 6,000 places were made available for this academic year.

Policy Impact:

The additional places being provided on a range of employment and education measures in 2013 will have a direct impact in providing opportunities for people who are currently long-term unemployed.

While there should be an impact in improving people's probability of sustainable exit from the Live Register as a result of these measures, the impact is not immediately quantifiable. However, we do have some preliminary evaluation of a significant component of Pathways to Work - the JobBridge Internship Scheme. The findings of the interim evaluation of JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme by Indecon International Economic Consultants, published in October 2012, found that 61% of finishers secured employment within five months of completing their internship. These progression rates compare favourably with European averages in this area and represent very significant progress in a short period of time. Long-term unemployed made up 38% of participants covered by the evaluation.

More generally, while it is clear that long-term unemployment remains stubbornly high, there was a noticeable reduction in the inflow into long-term duration on the live register in the 2012. For example, the number of people unemployed for between one and two years fell from almost 80,000 in early 2011 to 55,000 at the end of 2012 (which is just under 13% of the

total on the Live Register). This downward trend has continued in the first quarter of 2013, so that the size of this group looks set to fall below 50,000 by the end of the year. However, many of those who became unemployed at the height of the jobs crisis in 2009 & 2010 have found it particularly difficult to find employment, with those on the Live Register for more than two years accounting for 32% (135,000) of all live registrants in March 2013. They are now a priority group for activation measures.

Youth Unemployment Data

156. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent to which youth unemployment currently reflected in the live register is likely to be affected by her proposals to address the issue of youth unemployment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19403/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The latest published figures show there were some 66,552 young people under 25 years of age signing on the Live Register in March 2013. This represents a 9% decrease from twelve months previously when there were 72,953 young people signing on. One in three young people (35%) on the Live Register had been signing on continuously for more than a year, which is similar to the proportion twelve months previously (36%).

The Government's policies in relation to youth unemployment are set out in reply to a separate question from the Deputy for answer today (Ref no.19401-13).

The most recently published official forecasts are that the overall unemployment rate is expected to fall to 13% by the end of 2015, which would imply a youth unemployment rate of 25-27% as compared with an average of 30% in 2012. The most recent trends suggest that the outcome is likely to be somewhat more favourable than these projections. It is to be expected that any favourable trends in youth unemployment will be reflected in further reductions in the number of young people on the Live Register.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

157. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent to which previously the self-employed have been facilitated by way of social welfare payment and support; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19404/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Self-employed persons are liable for PRSI at the Class S rate of 4% which entitles them to access long-term benefits such as State pension (contributory) and widow's, widower's or surviving civil partner's pension (contributory).

Self-employed workers may establish eligibility to assistance-based payments such as jobseeker's allowance. They can apply for the means-tested jobseeker's allowance if their business ceases or if they are on low income as a result of a downturn in demand for their services. In general, their means will take account of the level of earnings in the last twelve months in determining their expected income for the following year and, in the current climate, account is taken of the downward trend in the economy. As in the case of a non-self-employed unemployed claimant of jobseeker's allowance, the means of husband/wife, civil partner or cohabitant will be taken into account in deciding on entitlement to a payment.

Recipients of jobseeker's allowance can, subject to satisfying the requisite qualifying conditions, access a range of employment support measures designed to encourage and support social welfare recipients to reduce their dependency on welfare payments. Supports available include the back to education programmes and back to work schemes. In addition, a fully integrated range of services and supports is available to jobseekers and employers through Intreo, a new service from the Department of Social Protection.

National Internship Scheme Placements

158. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Social Protection the time frame a person has to be in receipt of a job seeker's payment prior to being eligible for placement on an internship through the jobBridge National Internship Programme; if the same timeframe applies to persons who were in receipt of carer's allowance immediately prior to receiving a jobseekers payment; the reason for such a waiting period and if the eligibility criteria for the jobBridge programme need to be reviewed. [19407/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Since it commenced on 1 July, 2011, Jobbridge has made exceptional progress. At 18 April, 2013, 16,545 people had commenced internships, 5,947 individuals were on internships and 2,452 internship opportunities were advertised.

Jobbridge is limited to individuals who are in receipt of a Live claim (Jobseekers Allowance/Jobseekers Benefit/One Parent Family Payment/Disability Allowance) or are signing on for credits for at least 3 of the last 6 months (78 Days). Carer's Allowance is not an eligible payment. Time spent in receipt of this payment does not, of itself, contribute to eligibility for a Jobbridge internship. It continues to be essential to strike a balance between our commitments to combat unemployment through the up-skilling opportunities provided by quality internship placements that offer real workplace experience, on the one hand, and the potential to destabilise the normal functioning of the labour market and a consequent reduction of opportunities for permanent employment, on the other.

JobBridge has been launched in this targeted way to allocate scarce exchequer resources to make maximum impact for long term unemployment while ensuring that it does not replace or displace the normal operation of the labour market. As the Deputy will be aware, an independent evaluation of the Scheme is currently being finalised by Indecon International Economic Consultants. The final report will be published in the coming weeks. It is at this stage that further consideration will be given to amending the terms and conditions of the Scheme.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

159. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will be made in relation to an appeal for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway. [19418/13]

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 26 October 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 12 April 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.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

160. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Cork may expect a decision on their claim for domiciliary care allowance which is on appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19431/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received from the person concerned on the 10th October 2012. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who considered that the child was not medically eligible for DCA. A letter issued on the 15th November 2012 outlining the decision to refuse the allowance. The person concerned subsequently lodged an appeal against this decision.

As part of the appeal process, the case has been forwarded to another of the Department's Medical Assessors for further consideration, including a review of any new information supplied. Upon receipt of the Medical Assessor's opinion, the case will be further examined and allowed or forwarded for consideration by the Appeals Office.

Illness Benefit Appeals

161. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an appeal for illness benefit will be finalised in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19433/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Payment of illness benefit, to the person concerned, was disallowed by a Deciding Officer following an examination by a Medical Assessor of the Department who expressed the opinion that she was capable of work. An appeal was opened and in the context of that appeal her case was reviewed by a second Medical Assessor who also expressed the opinion that she was capable of work.

I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that, following receipt of the grounds of appeal from the person concerned, the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer have been sought. On receipt of their response 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.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

162. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to correspondence (details supplied) and if there are plans to bring the State contributory pension within the standard PAYE taxing procedures; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19436/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): When State pension is awarded, officials in my Department inform the claimant in writing that the pension is regarded as taxable income for income tax purposes and that liability for tax will depend on the overall circumstances of the individual. They are further informed that it is not the role of my Department to

deduct tax at source but that the Revenue Commissioners will be informed of the payment type and amount being made to the claimant.

I have noted the relevant correspondence. However, the collection of taxes is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners and any changes to current arrangements is a matter for the Minister for Finance.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

163. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will review criteria on which the contributory pension is awarded to self-employed people who have an outstanding PRSI liability by ensuring that the pension is awarded from the date the person reaches pension age and any liability deducted from those payments, rather than preventing them from being awarded the pension until the liability is discharged. [19439/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Revenue Commissioners are the primary collection agents of the Department in relation to PRSI. Income tax and PRSI payable by a self-employed contributor is treated as one aggregate sum in accordance with the provisions of social welfare legislation. Where a person applying for State pension (contributory) has been a self-employed contributor, the person must pay all outstanding PRSI contributions before they are deemed to satisfy the qualifying conditions.

I have no plans to change these conditions relating to the award of pensions. The State pension is a very valuable asset and it is important, therefore, that those who claim a State pension have paid sufficient PRSI contributions over a working life and discharge those liabilities in full.

The recently published Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund found that self-employed persons enjoy greater value from the payment of social insurance than employed persons, in particular, due to the lower rate of PRSI paid.

Questions Nos. 164 to 166, inclusive, withdrawn.

National Internship Scheme Administration

167. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the continuation of the JobBridge scheme for the remainder of 2013 (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19478/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Since it commenced on 1 July, 2011, Jobbridge has made exceptional progress. At 18 April, 2013, 16,545 had commenced internships, 5,947 individuals were on internships and 2,452 internship opportunities were advertised. In the context of Budget 2013, the Government increased the number of JobBridge places from 6,000 to 8,500. Accordingly, the previous deadline for applications for internships of 30 June, 2013, is no longer valid. This information has been conveyed on the JobBridge website www.jobbridge.ie.

Disability Allowance Appeals

168. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite the medical referee decision on disability benefit for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19483/13]

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 26th 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. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 13th April 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.

Disability Allowance Appeals

169. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a disability allowance will be paid to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry. [19486/13]

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, including that adduced at oral hearing, allowed the appeal of the person concerned who has been notified of the 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.

Special Areas of Conservation Designation

170. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the statutory footing for the management plan of lands owned by an organisation (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19181/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The lands referred to in the question are situated within the Murrough Wetlands candidate Special Area of Conservation and the Murrough Wetlands Special Protection Area.

The lands in question are in the ownership of the organisation referred to by the Deputy and I understand that they are managed principally for their ecological value. I am not aware of any statutory management plan in place for the lands in question, but my officials have engaged with the owner where consents under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 have been required for the purposes of its operations.

Departmental Expenditure

171. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if any of his Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19210/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As the Deputy will be aware, my Department's provision for capital expenditure in 2012 was €43m. Capital expenditure to year-end totalled circa €41.6m and an amount of €1.2m in capital funding was carried over into 2013 in accordance with the procedures governing unspent capital. The remainder of my Department's unspent capital allocation, just over €200,000 or less than half of

one per cent of the capital allocation, was surrendered to the exchequer at year-end. No funding was transferred from capital to current during the year.

Departmental Expenditure

172. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide the month by month profile for his Department's 2013 capital expenditure;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19226/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The month-by-month profile for my Department's capital expenditure is provided in the table below:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Full Year
€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000
1,366	4,481	820	3,139	1,567	3,425	1,563	3,855	1,410	5,181	4,472	8,116	39,395

Capital expenditure in 2012 totalled just under €41.6m.

Architectural Heritage

173. **Deputy Aine Collins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if his attention has been drawn to the fact that many thatched houses are falling into ruin in view of the fact that owners cannot afford the 60 or 70 thousand euros needed to redo the thatch; if he will consider revisiting the issue identifying the thatched houses that are realistically capable of being maintained allowing him to then make adequate grant aid available to these smaller amount of houses in order to prevent the vast majority of thatched houses disappearing into dereliction in the next few years. [19320/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Part IV of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2011 provides for the protection of architectural heritage. The Act gives primary responsibility to planning authorities to identify and protect architectural heritage, including thatched buildings, by including them on the Record of Protected Structures. Inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future. While the overall number of thatch roofs declined in the second half of the 20th century, legislative protection and heightened awareness of this part of our national heritage has assisted with the stabilisation of this decline.

As the Deputy can appreciate, the scope for funding for the conservation of the built heritage is constrained by the significant reduction in the public finances. There is currently a number of State financial supports providing for the conservation and restoration of heritage structures in general, or specifically aimed at thatched structures. In 2012, my Department provided €500,000 in grant-aid assistance through a *Structures at Risk Fund* administered by local authorities to assist with works to safeguard structures protected under the Planning and Development Acts which are at significant risk of deterioration. This funding assisted in the conservation of two thatched structures. This fund will operate again in 2013 with today (24 April, 2013) being the closing date for receipt of applications by my Department from local authorities under the scheme.

The Heritage Council, which is funded by my Department, grant-aided the restoration of twenty-three thatched structures under their Heritage Management Scheme in 2012. In addition, the Heritage Council, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, also administers a grants scheme to REPS 4 participants on the conservation and repair of traditional farm buildings, known as the Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme. Grants are available under this scheme to carry out approved conservation works to the exterior of farm outbuildings, including roofs. It will be a matter for the Council to decide how its funding should be allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports in 2013 and future years having regard to competing priorities for limited resources.

I am advised that the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government also administers a grant scheme for the renewal or repair of thatched roofs of owner occupied houses.

I understand, from applications for grant aid submitted to my Department, that the cost of re-thatching can vary considerably depending on a number of property specific factors. As part of the Advice Series for owners of historic buildings, my Department plans to publish guidance on the maintenance and repair of thatch in 2013, which will include further practical advice for owners and practitioners. This will be available on my Department's website at www.ahg.gov.ie.

Forestry Grants

174. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide an update on a forestry application (details supplied) [19405/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): While decisions on forestry applications are a matter for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, my Department is a statutory consultee under the regulatory framework governing forestry operations and management with the objective of ensuring that new and ongoing forest activities do not adversely impact on archaeological sites.

I understand that the decision to refuse the application in question has been appealed to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and that, as part of the appeal process, further observations have been sought from my Department. The matter will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Arts Promotion

175. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will consider a proposal to allow the Arts Council to register and recognise craft workers along the lines of people working in the Arts Council; if she will outline the role of the county arts officers in promoting craft workers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19416/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The Arts Council is a statutory body under the Arts Act 2003. Its functions are laid down by section 9(1) of that Act and are specific to the arts.

The Crafts Council of Ireland (CCoI) is the organisation with responsibility for the craft industry in Ireland and its activities are funded by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. Further details in relation to the Crafts Council are available on its website- www.ccoi.ie.

While recognising the separate, though complementary, roles of the two organisations, I can assure the Deputy that there is a significant level of co-operation between them. This was particularly evident to me in their recent work together on Ireland's Cultural Programme for our Presidency of the EU.

Irish Genealogy

176. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the access and rights that will be afforded to adopted people in tracing their genealogy as part of the Irish genealogy. [19157/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As the Deputy may be aware, the issue of adoption is dealt with by my colleague, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Ms Frances Fitzgerald, T.D.

My Department runs a website www.irishgenealogy.ie, which has two main elements. The first element contains almost 3 million Church records of births, marriages and burials, which may be searched free of charge. The second element is a recently launched webportal, which enables users to search genealogy records from a number of on-line sources. The website is free to access and contains no restrictions surrounding access to records held on the site.

Departmental Expenditure

177. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if any of his Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19212/13]

178. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide the month by month profile for his Department's 2013 capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19228/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Question Nos. 177 and 178 together.

I can confirm for the Deputy that none of my Department's 2012 capital allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year. In relation to my Department's 2013 capital allocation, a month by month profile of the allocation is provided in the following table. The profile includes a €10.4m capital carryover from 2012.

2013 Capital Profile

Month	€000
January	3,833
February	2,952
March	3,224
April	8,053
May	5,934
June	11,460
July	8,149
August	5,316
September	8,234
October	9,157
November	13,320
December	15,768
Total	95,400

Departmental Bodies

179. **Deputy Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will reconsider the appointment of a person (details supplied) to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, that this person’s position is in conflict with his directorship of Mainstream Renewable Power, which is seeking to build hundreds of wind turbines in the midlands; in view of the fact that the SEAI have been tasked by him to determine issues related to deciding the appropriate separation distance between wind turbines and family homes, if minimum separation distances are increased wind farm developers state that they will be building fewer turbines which will impact their ability to generate profits; if he will consider appointing the EPA, as the statutory body for issues concerning noise; if he will undertake matters related to the review of the guidelines, as the SEAI have a conflicting role in that they are tasked with promoting wind energy; his views on whether this person’s involvement as director and advocate for Mainstream Renewable Power undermines the credibility of the SEAI; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19358/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): In January of this year I signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with my UK counterpart, Mr. Edward Davey M.P., to explore the potential for exporting wind based renewable energy from Ireland to the UK. Intensive discussions are being progressed by my Department and its UK counterpart on this matter. Whilst the signing of the MOU indicates a strong statement of intent on the part of both Governments, considerable work remains to be done to put the necessary comprehensive framework in place. This would be necessary in advance of any specific project being implemented and any such project will be subject to all appropriate statutory consents. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has no statutory responsibility in this regard and also has no regulatory role in the area or in relation to noise control.

More generally, a technical review of the Wind Energy Guidelines is being overseen by officials from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, my Department and the SEAI. This review will be completed later this year. SEAI has been commissioned to conduct a targeted study of certain aspects of the Wind Energy Guidelines 2006. This study will examine the manner in which the guidelines address key issues of community concern such as noise (including separation distance) and shadow flicker. The study will be one input into the review of the Wind Energy Guidelines. I have no doubt that SEAI will discharge this work in a fully objective manner.

The Environmental Protection Agency is an independent public body operating under the aegis of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and issues concerning its remit are in the first instance a matter for the Minister of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

Finally, the appointments of the Chair and Directors to the Board of SEAI are made in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Sustainable Energy Act 2002. The Board acts in accordance with the revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies published by the Department of Finance in 2009, and all Board members are required to make Statements of Interests under the Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 and 2001.

Public Service Pension Scheme

180. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason part time fire-fighters are not entitled to a pension although they are

paying a pension levy [19196/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act, 2009, provides that any public servant, who is a member of a public service pension scheme, is entitled to a benefit under such a scheme or receives payment in lieu of membership in such a scheme, is subject to a deduction from their remuneration.

In 2008, retained fire-fighters were given the option of joining the Local Government Superannuation Scheme (LGSS). Retained fire-fighters who opted not to join the scheme receive, on retirement, a gratuity of 1/8th of the annual retainer multiplied by the number of years of actual service (up to a maximum of four times the annual retainer). This is a payment in lieu of membership of a pension scheme and as such retained fire-fighters are subject to the deduction provided for in the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act, 2009.

All retained fire-fighters appointed after 1 January 2013 must join the Single Public Service Pension Scheme.

Energy Efficiency Programme

181. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the positive results achieved under the DEHLG2010 Energy Efficiency Programme by Dublin City Council where the BER rating on senior citizens' homes in the pilot area went from an F/G rating to a C1/B3 rating and additionally the significant savings which this has provided for the residents; in view of this, if he will outline his plans to extend this funding programme in order that similar retrofitting can be carried out across other senior citizen housing complexes. [19330/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The enhancement of energy efficiency standards remains a priority within my Department. In March, I announced a capital allocation of €10m to local authorities in respect of these energy efficiency retrofitting works for this year.

This year's 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 with the objective of returning as many vacant units as possible to productive use. Over that period some €52.5 million was recouped to local authorities in respect of improvements carried out to 4,774 dwellings.

In 2013 I am targeting grants at those older houses and apartments which lack adequate insulation and draught proofing. Local authorities have been advised to pay particular attention to dwellings which accommodate older people and people with disabilities.

The retrofitting programme offers a very practical and cost-effective way for local authorities to improve the standard of their housing stock. The programme brings immediate as well as long term benefits for the community as a whole in terms of sustaining and creating jobs, and delivering a greener Ireland for the future.

Motor Tax Collection

182. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on the following matter regarding motor tax (details supplied);

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19385/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): There have been no recent changes to the supporting documentation required for the taxing of a commercial vehicle. Licensing authorities have an obligation under Article 3 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 to be satisfied that a vehicle is correctly taxed and the authority must have adequate documentation to support a claim for the goods rate of motor tax. Such documentation may include evidence of registration for VAT purposes, a certificate of commercial insurance or, at the discretion of the licensing authority concerned, any other appropriate document that would indicate that the applicant is in trade or business. It is up to the individual concerned to provide whatever evidence is required by the licensing authority in order for it to be satisfied that the applicant is entitled to claim a commercial rate of tax.

Household Charge Collection

183. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline, on a local authority basis, the compliance rate for payment of the household tax per month since November 2012. [19188/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Local Government (Household Charge) Act 2011 provides the legislative basis for the Household Charge. Under the Act, an owner of a residential property on the liability date is liable to pay the Household Charge, unless otherwise exempted or entitled to claim a waiver. It is a matter for an owner of a residential property to determine liability and pay the Charge.

The Local Government Management Agency is administering the Household Charge system on a shared service/agency basis for all county and city councils. The attached table details the properties registered for the Household Charge, including waiver registrations, by local authority area on 30 November 2012, 31 December 2012, 31 January 2013, 28 February 2013, 31 March 2013 and on 19 April 2013, expressed as a percentage of the number of estimated liable properties.

I am advised by the Agency that due to relatively low volumes, waiver details are not automatically extracted on a daily basis and the numbers of waivers cannot be retrospectively generated once a date has passed. Therefore, in assembling the table, the figure for the number of waivers for some dates has been estimated by the Agency using the closest available date for which waiver figures are recorded. Given the low number of waivers as a proportion of the total number of properties registered, the impact on the attached table is likely to be minimal, if any.

County/ City Council	Estimated No. of Liable Prop- erties	Properties Registered as a % of Liable Properties 30/11/2012	Properties Registered as a % of Liable Properties 31/12/2012	Properties Registered as a % of Liable Properties 31/1/2013	Properties Regis- tered as a % of Liable Properties 28/2/2013	Properties Registered as a % of Liable Properties 31/3/2013	Properties Registered as a % of Liable Properties 19/4/2013
Carlow	18,257	66.20%	68.10%	70.50%	71.80%	72.70%	73.60%
Cavan	25,611	67.20%	68.30%	69.90%	70.90%	71.60%	72.30%
Clare	45,786	72.10%	73.30%	74.70%	76.30%	77.40%	78.30%
Cork City	41,649	67.50%	68.30%	69.00%	69.60%	70.60%	71.70%

County/ City Council	Estimated No. of Liable Prop- erties	Properties Registered as a % of Liable Properties 30/11/2012	Properties Registered as a % of Liable Properties 31/12/2012	Properties Registered as a % of Liable Properties 31/1/2013	Properties Regis- tered as a % of Liable Properties 28/2/2013	Properties Registered as a % of Liable Properties 31/3/2013	Properties Registered as a % of Liable Properties 19/4/2013
Cork County	143,887	64.70%	66.50%	68.00%	69.00%	70.10%	70.90%
Donegal	65,331	55.30%	57.10%	58.80%	60.70%	61.60%	62.50%
Dublin City	190,685	72.60%	73.30%	74.20%	74.50%	75.40%	76.10%
Dún Laoghaire -Rath- down	74,390	85.20%	85.80%	86.60%	86.90%	87.50%	88.00%
Fingal	90,286	68.80%	69.90%	71.00%	71.60%	72.80%	73.70%
Galway City	27,086	74.50%	77.60%	78.60%	79.20%	79.90%	80.70%
Galway County	62,851	66.40%	66.80%	69.40%	71.10%	72.00%	73.10%
Kerry	58,792	73.90%	74.70%	75.70%	76.60%	77.30%	78.20%
Kildare	68,215	67.20%	68.30%	69.70%	70.30%	71.40%	72.30%
Kilkenny	32,067	66.70%	68.40%	70.40%	71.20%	72.00%	72.80%
Laois	26,185	62.80%	63.70%	65.40%	66.50%	67.30%	68.10%
Leitrim	13,069	70.20%	70.80%	72.60%	73.60%	74.80%	75.70%
Limerick City	20,380	69.40%	70.10%	70.80%	71.50%	72.90%	73.80%
Limerick County	46,473	68.30%	69.20%	70.70%	71.50%	72.50%	73.40%
Longford	12,928	67.90%	70.10%	72.30%	74.10%	75.10%	76.20%
Louth	41,176	61.30%	62.60%	64.20%	64.90%	65.80%	66.50%
Mayo	51,363	75.40%	76.70%	79.50%	80.90%	81.60%	82.10%
Meath	60,652	63.10%	64.70%	66.00%	66.80%	67.70%	68.50%
Mon- aghan	20,176	68.80%	69.50%	71.40%	72.00%	72.90%	73.40%
North Tipperary	24,839	72.80%	73.60%	75.00%	75.80%	77.00%	77.60%
Offaly	25,224	60.20%	62.40%	63.70%	65.10%	66.10%	67.10%
Ros- common	23,888	67.50%	69.50%	73.40%	75.40%	76.30%	77.30%
Sligo	25,281	70.50%	72.40%	75.10%	76.20%	77.10%	78.20%
South Dublin	81,822	64.00%	65.10%	66.00%	66.50%	67.70%	68.80%
South Tipperary	30,368	68.30%	69.20%	70.70%	71.50%	72.30%	73.20%
Waterford City	15,753	67.70%	68.40%	69.50%	70.10%	70.90%	71.70%
Waterford County	24,777	66.50%	67.30%	68.50%	69.40%	70.40%	71.30%
West- meath	29,872	68.40%	69.20%	70.30%	71.00%	71.70%	72.90%
Wexford	56,030	65.50%	66.30%	68.00%	69.10%	70.00%	70.80%
Wicklow	45,665	70.20%	70.90%	71.90%	72.60%	73.40%	74.10%

Housing Grants

184. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he will allocate the much needed funding to Westmeath County Council for housing grants. [19191/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): On 22 February 2013 I announced capital allocations to local authorities under the suite of Grants for Older People and People with a Disability amounting to €42.750 million. This year I allocated local authorities the full amount of their contractual commitments which, in the case of Westmeath County Council, amounted to €47,803. The balance of the available funding was allocated on the basis of each authority's share of the new applications on hand in January 2013. This brought Westmeath County Council's overall allocation to €435,722. On 22 April I announced a supplementary allocation of €1.2m to 13 Local Authorities which included €145,844 for Westmeath County Council bringing their overall allocation to €581,566.

Departmental Expenditure

185. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if any of his Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19214/13]

186. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide the month by month profile for his Department's 2013 capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19230/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 185 and 186 together.

In 2012, no provision in my Department's voted capital allocation was used for current expenditure purposes. The Revised Estimates for Public Services 2013, published recently by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, provide for capital expenditure of €718m in respect of my Department during the year, comprising €675m in net expenditure and €43m in unspent capital provisions carried over from 2012. The monthly profile for this capital expenditure is set out in the following table.

Environment, Community and Local Government

Monthly profile of capital expenditure (2013)

-	Net	Capital	Total
Month	Expenditure	Carryover	
	€000	€000	€000
Jan	10,346	0	10,346
Feb	14,317	0	14,317
Mar	10,223	0	10,223
Apr	24,327	11,940	36,267
May	40,887	11,260	52,147
Jun	36,999	9,746	46,745
Jul	47,353	2,604	49,957

-	Net	Capital	Total
Aug	36,244	500	36,744
Sep	70,006	1,000	71,006
Oct	86,771	2,000	88,771
Nov	98,328	3,000	101,328
Dec	199,211	950	200,161
TOTAL	675,012	43,000	718,012

Building Regulations Application

187. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reasons for not including members of the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists in the list of competent designers and certifiers when this profession was previously recognised and established in the State to carry out this task. [19312/13]

188. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 838 of 16 April 2013 stating that members of CIAT must change their profession to continue practising in the State despite the fact that no public statement was made and if he will make a statement on this matter to inform members of CIAT on the reasons for justifying the actual discrimination that they suffer [19313/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 187 and 188 together.

Section 6 of the Building Control Act 1990 provides for the making of building control regulations which, among other things, may require the submission to building control authorities of certificates of compliance with the requirements of the building regulations and may prescribe the designation of the persons or the classes of persons by whom certificates of compliance may be given.

With effect from 1 March 2014 the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2013 will require, among other things, that design drawings demonstrating compliance with the requirements of the second schedule to the Building Regulations be lodged with the local building control authority prior to commencement of works and that a registered professional be assigned to inspect the implementation of the design during construction so that he/she is in a position to certify the completed building for compliance with the requirements of the second schedule to the Building Regulations. The statutory certificates of completion underpinning the procedures outlined must be signed by a registered professional i.e. a person who is included on the statutory registers of architects or building surveyors maintained in accordance with parts 3 and 5 respectively of the Building Control Act 2007 or on the register of chartered engineers established under the Institution of Civil Engineers of Ireland (Charter Amendment) Act 1969.

Architects, Building Surveyors and Chartered Engineers are the construction professions typically involved in the design of construction works in Ireland and reference to these professions in regulation is entirely appropriate. It is open to persons, including members of the Architect’s Alliance of Ireland, the Group of Independent Architects of Ireland and the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists, who possess the requisite experience and competence in the design of buildings to seek inclusion on either of the statutory registers of architects or building surveyors as established under Part 3 and Part 5 respectively of the Building Control Act 2007. Inclusion on either register will enable a person to sign statutory certificates of compliance as provided for under the new regulations when they come into effect on and from 1

March 2014.

It is my understanding that architectural technologists have already successfully sought inclusion on both registers. I have recently asked Mr. Garrett Fennell, Solicitor, who is currently serving as the Chairperson of the Admissions Board relevant to the register of Architects, to carry out an independent review of the experience to date in relation to the operation of the register with a view to identifying any further improvements that can be made at this point. The terms of reference for the review specifically address the matter of how the registration of practically trained architects can be further encouraged and I look forward to any recommendations and views the review report may offer in this regard in the coming months.

Departmental Contracts

189. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when final payment will be paid to a company (details supplied) by his Department. [19322/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The final account is currently being examined and a payment will issue shortly.

Regeneration Projects Funding

190. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the proposals for the future funding of an organisation (details supplied). in Dublin 11. [19359/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department has provided over €700 million to support the Ballymun regeneration programme to date. This has facilitated the demolition of all but one of the towers and nearly all the flat blocks as well as the construction of over 2,900 social, voluntary, private and affordable residential units, new local parks and playgrounds, neighbourhood centres and a new traditional style main street. The programme has also provided state of the art community facilities, such as the Axis theatre, the Leisure Centre and Civic Centre. This project has now moved into its completion phase and my Department’s priority is to ensure that the remaining housing need is met while the investment to date is fully protected.

As part of its commitment to Ballymun regeneration, my Department has supported an ongoing social regeneration programme, which includes the provision of funding for the Ballymun Community Law Centre. Notwithstanding the constraints on capital expenditure across the public sector, my Department will continue to support the completion strategy for Ballymun, including in respect of social regeneration measures.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Provision

191. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to parliamentary question No. 186 on 18 April 2013, if he will provide the information sought in the second part of the question, specifically, if the residents of this area who are subjected to using bottled water due to the condition of their water will be exempt from water charges when they are introduced; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [19361/13]

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. The current position is that domestic water charges will not commence before 2014. The Government will be reviewing the timeline for charges with programme partners at the next review of the Programme of Assistance which commences this week.

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 Government will assign responsibility for the economic regulation of the water sector, including the setting of charges, to the Commission for Energy Regulation. The primary role of the regulator will be to protect the interests of customers and to ensure a consistent and appropriate level of service is provided to them. The approach to charges for properties connected to public water supplies will be included in a public consultation that will take place as part of the regulatory process.

Commercial Rates Write-Offs

192. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if under existing provisions local authorities have the authority to waive/reduce outstanding commercial rate liabilities that are owed on vacant properties as a means of encouraging businesses to occupy commercial spaces; if he will consider introducing measures that would offer incentives to local authorities to reduce the burden of commercial rates in a targeted fashion in order to assist in addressing the issue of dereliction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19429/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation under the Valuation Act 2001. The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority.

Under rating legislation, the person liable for payment of rates is generally the person in occupation of a rateable property on the date of the making of the rate by the relevant local authority. The Local Government Act 1946 provides that where a rateable property is unoccupied on the date of the making of the rate, the owner becomes liable for payment of rates. However, the owner is entitled to a refund if the property is vacant for specified purposes, namely, where the premises are unoccupied for the purpose of the execution of additions, alterations or repairs; where the owner is bona fide unable to obtain a suitable tenant at a reasonable rent; and where the premises are vacant pending redevelopment. In most rating authorities, 100% of the amount paid is refundable to the owner.

Should an occupier commence his or her occupation of rateable premises after the date of the making of the rate in any given year, that person would not normally be primarily liable for rates for that year. I recognise that these are difficult economic times for many businesses and I am continuing to keep all matters relating to commercial rates under regular review.

Litter Pollution Fines

193. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to introduce legislation to assist local authorities with issuing fines in relation to dumping on private property, most notably in developments run by a property management company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19452/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Existing penalties available under the Litter Pollution Acts for litter offences range from an on-the-spot fine of €150, to a maximum fine of €3,000 on summary conviction, and a maximum fine of €130,000 on conviction on indictment. The fines for continuing offences are €600 per day for summary offences and €10,000 per day for indictable offences. A person convicted of a litter offence may also be required by the court to pay the local authority's costs and expenses in investigating the offence and bringing the prosecution.

Penalties for more serious dumping offences provided for under the Waste Management Acts are also substantial. Persons who are found to be responsible for, or involved in, the unauthorised disposal of waste are liable to a maximum fine of €3,000 on summary conviction and/or imprisonment for up to 12 months, and to a maximum fine of €15 million on conviction on indictment and/or imprisonment for up to 10 years.

Following a review of legislation in this area and notwithstanding the significant penalties currently in place, my Department is currently preparing legislative proposals that would provide for the introduction of a specific on-the-spot fine for incidences of fly-tipping or small-scale illegal dumping. I expect to be in a position to submit proposed Heads of a Bill in this regard to Government for approval shortly.

Minimum standards for rental accommodation are prescribed in the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008 and provide that each house must have access to suitable and adequate pest and vermin-proof refuse storage facilities. These Regulations were further amended by the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses)(Amendment) Regulations 2009 which expanded the definition of 'a proper state of structural repair' to allow for all aspects of the internal and external appearance of a dwelling to be taken into account for the purposes of the Regulations. A comprehensive new sanctions regime for the enforcement of these standards is also available to local authorities following the enactment of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. Fines for non-compliance with the Regulations have been significantly increased; the maximum fine has increased from €3,000 to €5,000 and the fine for each day of a continuing offence has increased from €250 to €400.

Personal Insolvency Act

194. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the annual revenues that will be generated by the new personal insolvency sector being established to deal with the mechanisms in the Personal Insolvency Act 2012. [19351/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Section 20 of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 deals with the fees chargeable by the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI). Application fees for the three personal insolvency arrangements have yet to be determined by the ISI. Therefore, at the present time it is not possible to indicate what revenue may be generated by the Service in this regard. The ISI will also generate revenue from application fees which will be charged to persons wishing to become Personal Insolvency Practitioners (PIPs). However, at this stage it cannot be estimated how many persons will apply for that role and how

many will actually be authorised to practice.

Under the Personal Insolvency Act 2012, Approved Intermediaries cannot charge a debtor a fee in connection with Debt Relief Notice applications. In the case of processing Debt Settlement Arrangements (DSAs) and Personal Insolvency Arrangements (PIAs) it will be the role of the PIP to negotiate their fees on a case by case basis. PIPs fees will be subject to creditors approval and will be paid from the debtor's contribution to the arrangement. I am advised by the ISI that it is not possible at the present time to indicate with accuracy what revenue may be generated by this business sector.

Equality Issues

195. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will respond to the following query regarding the Employment Equality Act (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19179/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The issue here is addressed in the Programme for Government. The two Ministers centrally concerned, the Minister for Education and Skills, Deputy Quinn and myself, as the Minister for Justice and Equality, are committed to finding a solution which provides for an appropriate balance of competing fundamental rights that is constitutionally sound. I consider that an extensive consultative process and formal assessment of the options should be undertaken and it is my intention to ask the new Irish Human Rights and Equality Commissioners to examine the issue as a priority and to report on their views and recommendations. I am committed to bringing forward Government proposals on this issue once this consultation process is completed.

Residency Permits

196. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made to date in determination of eligibility for long term residency/naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19192/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned has been granted permission to remain in the State for the period to 27th March, 2015. This decision was conveyed in writing to the person concerned by letter dated 27th March, 2013. It will be open to the person concerned to apply to the Citizenship Section of my Department for a Certificate of Naturalisation when he is in a position to meet the lawful residency criteria applicable to the lodgement of such applications. Details on the criteria to be met by persons lodging such applications are available from my Department's Website (www.justice.ie). Given that the person concerned has no history of employment in the State under Work Permit or Work Authorisation conditions, the issue of an application for the immigration status of Long Term Residency would not arise.

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.

Departmental Expenditure

197. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if any of his Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19219/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that none of my Department's capital expenditure allocation in 2012 was used for current expenditure purposes.

Departmental Expenditure

198. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide the month by month profile for his Department's 2013 capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19235/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The 2013 profile of Capital Expenditure within the Justice Group of Votes is set out as follows:

2013	Capital Profiled Expenditure€ ,000
January	1,411
February	10,054
March	2,518
April	6,464
May	5,061
June	4,090
July	4,731
August	4,727
September	4,041
October	5,047
November	6,913
December	5,593
Total	60,650

Garda Vetting of Personnel

199. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to shorten the completion of the vetting process (details supplied). [19295/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) provides employment vetting for approximately 20,000 organisations in Ireland, registered with the Unit for this purpose, which employ personnel to work in a full-time, part time, voluntary or student capacity with children and / or vulnerable adults. The Unit processed approximately 328,000 vetting applications on behalf of these organisations in 2012.

The current average processing time for applications is approximately 12 weeks from date of receipt. However, seasonal fluctuations and the necessity to seek additional information on particular applications can result in this processing time being exceeded on occasion. All organisations registered for Garda Vetting are aware of the processing time-frames for the receipt of Garda vetting and have been advised to factor this into their recruitment and selection process.

Following discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, sanction was granted for an additional 25 staff to be re-deployed from the Department of Agriculture to the Garda Central Vetting Unit. I am pleased to announce that these personnel transferred to the GCVU on 22 April 2013. When these staff have been fully trained on the vetting process I expect there will be a positive effect on vetting times. Since I became Minister, it has been a priority for me that processing times should be kept to a minimum consistent with maintaining the overall integrity of the vetting system. This is an absolute necessity given the very important role of the vetting system.

Visa Applications

200. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will facilitate the extension of stamp 3 visa in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19299/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service that the person in question submitted an application to the General Immigration Division on 14 March 2013. All applications are dealt with in chronological order and this application will receive attention shortly.

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.

Garda Remuneration

201. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality in view of the fact that the proposals of the Croke Park extension has been rejected by the trade union movement, if he will give consideration to amending the proposed changes in the pay and conditions of members of An Garda Síochána to better reflect the anti-social hours of work which Gardaí must do, the danger that Gardaí put themselves in to protect the public and to help bolster morale amongst Gardaí; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19314/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Following discussions led by the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform at the Cabinet yesterday, the Government reaffirmed its requirement for €300m of pay and pension bill savings in 2013 and €1bn by 2015. The Government further agreed to request the CEO of the Labour Relations Commission to make contact with the parties in the coming days to establish whether or not there is a basis for a negotiated agreement to meet these budgetary targets.

Recognition of Foreign Divorces

202. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the fact that certain divorces obtained outside the EU are not recognised here. [19353/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The recognition of non-EU divorces in Ireland is governed by the *Domicile and Recognition of Foreign Divorces Act 1986*. Where domicile is not in question, then a divorce may be recognised if evidence of due process

and documentary evidence of the divorce itself are provided. However, if a person's domicile cannot be determined, it may be difficult or impossible to determine that the divorce is entitled to recognition under the Act. If a particular divorce is not recognised, the spouse or spouses may apply to the courts under section 29 of the Family Law Act 1995 for a declaration as to marital status.

I am aware that the establishment of a person's domicile in this context may sometimes be difficult and complex and that such cases may often be very stressful for the parties concerned; however the arrangements in place are long standing and tested and I do not have any proposals to change them at this time.

Declarations of Insolvency

203. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position of this State recognising bankruptcy declarations in other jurisdictions; and if there are bankruptcy declarations in jurisdictions which this State does not recognise. [19354/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The EU Regulation on insolvency proceedings of 2000, which came into effect in 2002, is a mutual recognition instrument. In determining an application for the opening of an insolvency proceeding, listed in the Annex to the Regulation, for which it would have exclusive power as the primary proceedings of a company or of a natural person, the Regulation requires that a court should determine the centre of main interest of the applicant in the context of assuming jurisdiction.

Under the EU Insolvency Regulation, Member States recognise bankruptcies in other Member States where the centre of main interest of the debtor is determined to be within that Member State.

The European Commission in December, 2012 published a proposal to modernise cross-border insolvency law which seeks to make cross-border insolvency proceedings more efficient, benefiting both debtors and creditors throughout the EU. One of the primary aims of the new Regulation will be to give potentially viable companies and entrepreneurs a second chance before being declared insolvent. The proposal also addresses a range of other insolvency issues. Detailed consideration of the provisions contained in the new draft Regulation has now commenced in a Working Group chaired by the Irish Presidency.

In relation to bankruptcy orders arising outside of the EU, an Irish Court when faced with an application for the recognition of a foreign bankruptcy order will, on basis of comity of nations consider the process in that jurisdiction and decide whether it would recognise such an order were it to be made in this jurisdiction. It would, depending on the circumstances of the particular case, be open to the Court to recognise the foreign bankruptcy order based on evidence produced to the Court.

Debt Resolution Processes

204. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an estimate of the number of applications for personal insolvency orders, bankruptcies and debt relief notices that will be made in the State in the first 12 months after the commencement of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012. [19355/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): It is difficult to ascertain the

likely demand on the Insolvency Service of Ireland. The tentative estimate of applications for the two main debt resolution processes - the Debt Settlement Arrangement and Personal Insolvency Arrangement - is roughly 15,000 applications plus a further 3,000 to 4,000 applications for Debt Relief Notices in the first full year. In addition, approximately 3,000 bankruptcy applications are expected during this time.

Proposed Legislation

205. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if legislation will be introduced to allow residents the right to light leylandii hedges impacting their own properties;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19412/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The difficulties experienced by property owners arising from trees and high hedges on neighbouring land were raised in both the Dáil and Seanad during passage of the Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Act 2009. My Department consulted on the matter with the Law Reform Commission, which had been involved in drafting the 2009 Act, and the Commission took the view that unreasonable interference caused by high trees or hedges was a matter in any particular case for tort law or more generally for planning or environmental law.

In England and Wales, for example, complaints about high hedges are dealt with under Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. This Act makes provision for local authorities to determine complaints by the owners or occupiers of domestic property who are adversely affected by evergreen hedges over 2 metres high. Broadly similar legislation, i.e. the High Hedges Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, came into operation in Northern Ireland on 31 March 2012. Helpful information notes for hedge owners, complainants and local authorities have been published on the web site of Northern Ireland's Department of the Environment.

The manner in which problems associated with high hedges and trees are resolved in both England and Wales and Northern Ireland demonstrates a clear preference for the resolution of such disputes at local level, preferably by mediation, with recourse to the courts only as a last resort. This is designed to reduce the risk of prolonged and costly litigation, and the risk that court proceedings would leave a legacy of bitterness between neighbours and ill-feeling in the local community. The introduction of such legislation in this jurisdiction would be a matter for the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and his Department.

Under our existing law, a person may be in a position to seek damages or an injunction requiring the cutting of boundary hedges or trees under the tort of nuisance. In order for the nuisance to be actionable, the person would have to show that an easement existed, i.e., whether an easement of light or otherwise, and that there had been a substantial interference with that right.

It is my intention to bring forward a Mediation Bill to promote mediation as a viable, effective and efficient alternative to court proceedings, thereby reducing legal costs and speeding up the resolution of disputes. The legislation, which is currently being drafted, will introduce an obligation on solicitors and barristers to advise any person wishing to commence court proceedings to consider mediation as a means of resolving a dispute before embarking on such proceedings. It will also provide that a court may, following the commencement of proceedings, on its own initiative invite parties to consider mediation and suspend the proceedings to facilitate the mediation process.

Asylum Applications

206. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will indi-

cate, pending decision under provision section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended), if a decision will issue in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19457/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As explained to the Deputy previously, the person concerned is a failed asylum applicant. Arising from the refusal of his asylum application, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 31st October, 2000, that the then Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against him. While written representations were submitted by and on behalf of the person concerned, no final decision was made in the case at that time.

Given that there was no further contact from or on behalf of the person concerned for some considerable time, processing of his case was put on hold. However, his case file was re-activated in May, 2008 when correspondence was received from his then legal representative indicating that further representations would follow soon after. However, no further representations were submitted at that time or indeed since.

The position in the State of the person concerned will now be decided by reference to 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. Any representations on file will be considered before a final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

The Deputy will appreciate that there is no basis for the making of any form of an interim decision in this, or indeed any other, case and, as such, the Deputy and the person concerned should await a substantive decision, of the nature described above, being made.

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.

Departmental Expenditure

207. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Defence if any of his Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19213/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Department of Defence did not use any of its 2012 capital expenditure allocation of €9.5m (including a capital carryover allocation of €0.5m) for current expenditure purposes.

Departmental Expenditure

208. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide the month by month profile for his Department's 2013 capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [19229/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The monthly profile for the Department of Defence capital expenditure allocation for 2013 (inclusive of capital carryover of €0.9m) is set out in tabular format below:

-	2013 Allocation€000
January	113
February	568
March	421
April	433
May	580
June	474
July	557
August	437
September	747
October	1,667
November	979
December	2,924
Total	9,900

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals

209. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will be made on an appeal to the 2012 disadvantaged area scheme appeal committee by a person (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay in deciding this appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19168/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named is one of a number of applicants under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, whose cases were impacted by the requirement of a minimum stocking density of 0.3 livestock units per forage hectare, and who applied for and were granted derogation in this regard.

However, as the applicant has not as yet demonstrated that the holding satisfies the scheme minimum stocking density requirements for the calendar year 2012, as of now, no payment is due in respect of this Scheme.

Limistéir faoi Mhíbhuntáiste

210. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén uair a dhéanfar cinneadh ar achomharc faoi scéim na limistéar faoi mhíbhuntáiste 2012 atá déanta ag duine i nGaillimh (sonraí tugtha); cén fáth go bhfuil móill leis an gcinneadh seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [19175/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Is é an duine ainmnithe duine amháin de líon iarratasóirí a raibh tionchar ar a gcásanna ag an riachtanas den íosdlús stocála de 0.3 aonad beostoic do gach heicteár foráiste in 2011, agus a rinne iarratas don mhaolú seo agus ar diúltaíodh dó ina leith.

Cuireadh achomhrac an duine ainmnithe ar aghaidh chuig Coiste Achmhrac an DAS le breithniú a dhéanamh air; a luaithe is a dhéanann an Coiste breithniú ar an achomhrac seo, cuirfear in iúl don duine i gceist maidir leis an gcinneadh, i scríbhinn.

Departmental Expenditure

211. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if any of his Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19209/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): No funds were transferred from the capital expenditure budget to current expenditure in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in 2012.

Departmental Expenditure

212. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide the month by month profile for his Department's 2013 capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19225/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The capital funding provided for my Department in 2013 is €193m (including €6m carryover from 2012). A profile of projected expenditure on a monthly basis is given below and the peak in capital expenditure profiled for April relates to the payment of forestry premia. Further information is available on the Department's website.

TOTAL 2013 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Total Administrative Capital	177	57	108	80	172	331	189	70	142	355	195	785	2,660
Total Programme Capital	19,501	9,490	6,456	35,656	13,902	16,060	9,850	11,080	10,876	16,031	16,280	25,158	190,340
Total Capital	19,678	9,547	6,564	35,736	14,074	16,391	10,039	11,150	11,018	16,386	16,475	25,943	193,000

Harbours and Piers Maintenance

213. **Deputy Paudie Coffey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to fund the dredging of Dunmore East Harbour, County Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19411/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Dunmore East Fishery Harbour Centre in County Waterford is one of the six designated Fishery Harbour Centres, which are owned, managed and maintained by my Department.

The need for dredging works at the harbour has been recognised by my Department. Reports commissioned have indicated that 80% of the harbour sediment contains Tributyltin (TBT). Unfortunately the costs associated with the disposal of dredge spoil containing TBT is significantly higher than for material that doesn't contain TBT.

Department officials are currently actively engaged in examining various options to choose the optimum dredging solution and disposal of the resulting dredge spoil. On completion of

their examination the position will be reassessed in the context of available exchequer funding and other national priorities.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

214. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the current position regarding a 2011 single farm payment claim in respect of a person (details supplied); if his Department has received correspondence from the forestry company involved outlining the nature of the mistake made on the 2011 single farm payment application; if his Department accepts the explanation offered for the error in the application which identified lands which had a technical approval as forestry land for 2011 and these lands were in fact only planted in the Spring of 2011 and included in the 2012 single payment as forestry land; if he will make arrangements to pay outstanding moneys on the 2011 claim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19430/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 12 May 2011. During processing, an issue arose regarding the usage of one of the parcels declared. My Department has now received material establishing that the land parcel in question is eligible for payment under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme. The payment due will issue shortly to the nominated bank account.

Coillte Teoranta Lands

215. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on a matter regarding Coillte (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19435/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Coillte Teoranta was established as a private commercial company under the Forestry Act, 1988 and day-to-day operational matters, such as the management of properties on their lands, are the responsibility of the company. The company has confirmed that Curraghchase House and Forest Park form part of the Coillte estate. In relation to the availability of grant assistance towards the restoration of stately houses, the provision of such grants does not fall within the remit of my Department.

Departmental Reports

216. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has received the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection for 2012; and if so when she will publish same. [19187/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Sixth Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection was received by my Department on the 1st of February this year. The report has been distributed to relevant Departments for observations on the range of issues highlighted by the report. This consultation process is almost complete. My Department will make the necessary arrangements to have the report laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas, as soon as possible.

Departmental Expenditure

217. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if any of her Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19211/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The capital allocation made available to my Department in 2012 was not used for current expenditure purposes.

Departmental Expenditure

218. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide the month by month profile for her Department's 2013 capital expenditure;; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19227/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): A sum of €25.760 million has been made available to my Department in 2013 to support capital developments. This includes:

National Children Detention Facilities (Subhead A.7)

Just over **€20 million** is being made available in 2013 to undertake the National Children Detention Facility Project at Oberstown. My officials in the Irish Youth Justice Service continue to work closely to progress this project with the Office of Public Works (OPW) which is providing the relevant project management services for my Department. The tender process for the award of a contract for the project is currently ongoing and the current projected timeline estimate from the OPW indicates that the first new residential units, to provide sufficient capacity to end the practice of sending 17 year old boys to St. Patrick's Institution, will be available for use by mid 2014.

2013 Childcare Capital Programme (Subhead B.4)

A sum of **€3.25 million** is being made available to support the ongoing improvement of the childcare sector. Community/not-for-profit and private childcare providers/childminders that are currently providing services under one or more of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs funding programmes - the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme, the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) programme and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme - are eligible to apply. The 2013 funding programme covers four strands as follows:

Strand 1: small grants to purchase equipment or carry out small maintenance work;

Strand 2: grants to improve accessibility of services for children with disabilities;

Strand 3: grants to provide natural outdoor spaces that promote active outdoor play; and

Strand 4: grants towards critical works to ensure that buildings are fit for purpose under the childcare regulations (open to community/not-for-profit services only).

Youth Programmes and Services (Subhead B.5)

A sum of **€1.75 million** is being made available under a capital programme that will include the allocation of €1 million to support the provision of new Youth Cafés. The programme is being administered on behalf of my Department by Pobal and the funds will include support for fit-out, refurbishment works or building enhancement projects for the start-up of new Youth Cafés. In addition, resources amounting to **€500,000** will be made available to youth projects for small refurbishment works or the purchase of equipment and a further **€250,000** towards play and recreation facilities.

The Profiles of Expenditure in relation to each of the Capital Programmes are set out in the

following table:

Sub-head	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	TO-TAL
-	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000
A.7	7	4	0	31	4,336	106	8,961	21	26	7,176	26	66	20,760
B.4	0	0	0	0	300	500	500	500	500	500	450	0	3,250
B.5	80	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	920	750	0	0	1,750
Total	87	4	0	31	4,636	606	9,461	521	1,446	8,426	476	66	25,760

Capital Expenditure Programme

219. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs with regard to the proposed allocation of €2.75 million under the childcare capital funding programme, if applications will be considered from childcare facilities that have not previously received funding under other capital programmes; if not, the other funding alternatives available for such facilities that wish to access the capital funding programme but find themselves excluded in view of the fact that they are not previous recipients; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19297/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I was successful in securing €2.75m in capital funding in Budget 2013, under the Childcare Capital Programme 2013, to support the ongoing improvement of the childcare sector. Community/not-for-profit and private childcare providers/childminders that are currently providing services under one or more of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs funding programmes - the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme, the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) programme and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme - are eligible to apply.

There is no requirement for childcare services, applying for funding under the Childcare Capital Programme 2013, to have received funding under previous childcare capital programmes.

The 2013 funding programme covers four strands:

Strand 1: small grants to purchase equipment or carry out small maintenance work;

Strand 2 : grants to improve accessibility of services for children with disabilities;

Strand 3: grants to provide natural outdoor spaces that promote active outdoor play; and

Strand 4: grants towards critical works to ensure that buildings are fit for purpose under the childcare regulations (open to community/not-for-profit services only).

It should be noted that in the case of applications for funding under Strand 3, the HSE will be consulted in relation to the proposed works. Applicants who are not required to be notified to the HSE will receive an on-site visit from Pobal or the local City/County Childcare Committee to verify the application and validate the need for the proposed works.

The 2013 Childcare Capital Programme will also be administered by Pobal on behalf of the Department. Full details of the Programme, including instructions on how to apply for a grant, are available on the Pobal website at www.pobal.ie. Applications must be made on-line, and the closing date for applications is Tuesday, 30 April 2013. There is no other capital funding available to my Department.

Inter-Country Adoptions

220. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the Irish Adoption Authority will engage with its counterpart in the Philippines with a view to removing or increasing the recently applied limit on the number of Filipino children approved for adoption by Irish parents; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19337/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Republic of the Philippines is an independent sovereign state. As such it is a matter for the Filipino authorities to decide the manner in which they choose to implement the Hague Convention, including the numbers of children deemed suitable for inter-country adoption having regard to the principles of the Convention.

Youth Services Provision

221. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if he will give priority to addressing the shortfall in funding to a youth service (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19380/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department provides a range of funding schemes, programmes and supports to the youth sector. Funding of some €53.173m is available in 2013 to support the provision of youth services and programmes to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. Targeted supports for disadvantaged, marginalised and at risk young people are provided through the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund Rounds 1 and 2 and Local Drugs Task Force Projects.

The Youth Service referred to by the Deputy administers a number of youth projects under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme and one Youth Information Centre on behalf of my Department. The allocations to the organisation's youth projects and youth information centre in 2013 are €511,465.

The savings required under the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure in respect of 2013 across all schemes and projects for youth amounted to €5.393m. Having regard to the savings requirements identified in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure my Department has tried to ensure that, in the determination process for the allocations, the front line youth services, particularly those for the most vulnerable young people are protected as far as is possible from the impact of any necessary reductions in funding. Organisations are being asked to consider any scope for savings and administrative costs in order to protect front line services.

A comprehensive Value for Money and Policy Review of youth funding has been commenced in my Department and this report is expected later this year. It is anticipated that this report will inform the provision of funding for youth programmes/services going into the future.

In addition my Department is developing a new youth policy framework for publication later this year. The new youth policy framework will aim to enhance the provision of youth services and activities and it will, inter alia, promote co-ordination between government departments and youth sector organisations with a view to maximising the effectiveness of the State funding available to support services for young people in future years.

Youth Services Provision

222. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will prioritise funding in respect of an application by a youth service (details supplied) in County

Kerry for the development of a youth café; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19388/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Funding of up to €1 million is available in 2013 from my Department for fit-out, refurbishment works or building enhancement projects for the start-up of new Youth Cafés. One of the core functions of a youth café is that it offers support to young people, ranging from practical support to advice through their participation in activities that are of interest to them and that are varied and on offer at times that suit their normal activities. The criteria for the Scheme places a clear focus on both long term sustainability and service planning.

Pobal is assisting my Department in managing the Youth Café Programme 2013. The closing date for applications was Friday, 12 April. I understand that Pobal received an application for funding from Kerry Diocesan Youth Service on behalf of Castleisland Youth Café. This application will be appraised along with all other applications received and Kerry Diocesan Youth Service have been informed that the appraisal process will take approximately 8 - 10 weeks. Those applicants who successfully make it through the first phase will proceed to phase 2 of the application process at the end of which, those successfully through that phase, will receive funding approval from my Department. The time frame for this is July to October, 2013 and it is anticipated that funding draw-down for the successful applications will commence in November 2013.

Childcare Education and Training Scheme Administration

223. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reasons persons on the jobbridge schemes are treated differently from other persons on activation schemes and persons in receipt of social welfare for the purposes of the childcare subvention scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19409/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme provides funding to community childcare not-for-profit services to enable them to charge reduced childcare rates to parents in receipt of social welfare payments or on low to middle incomes. Community childcare services qualify for grant aid on the basis of the level of service they provide and the profile of the parents benefiting from their service.

Parents qualify for support under the CCS programme on the basis of their social welfare entitlement. The JobBridge scheme, which is implemented by the Department of Social Protection, is a National Internship Scheme which provides work experience placement for unemployed people. Participants in the JobBridge scheme receive a weekly allowance of €50 in addition to any social welfare entitlement they may have.

Participants in the JobBridge scheme do not, on the basis of participation in the scheme, automatically qualify for subvention under the CCS programme but qualify on the basis of their underlying social welfare entitlement. For example, a parent who was in receipt of Job Seekers benefit and who holds a medical card qualifies for a subvention payment of €50 per week towards the cost of full-time childcare. If that parent enters the JobBridge scheme they will continue to be subvented at the rate of €50 per week for the duration of their participation in the scheme.

A parent entering the JobBridge scheme and having been in receipt of a social welfare payment that qualified them for the higher rate of subvention of €95 per week under the CCS programme would maintain that level of subvention support for the duration of their participation in the JobBridge scheme.

Inter-Country Adoptions

224. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs under the standardised framework for intercountry adoption assessments her understanding of the assessment process in relation to prospective adoptive parents in relation to their body mass index requirements; if the BMI target which was originally at 45 was reduced in 2010 to 40 and subsequently in 2012 to 35, her views on whether people who are above this level should be prohibited from being approved under the adoption assessment process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19415/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The decision to deem a person suitable and eligible to adopt is a matter for the Adoption Authority of Ireland and is taken under criteria outlined in Section 34 of the Adoption Act 2010. These criteria include that an applicant or applicants be of “*good health and of an age so that he or she has a reasonable expectation of being capable throughout the child’s childhood*”, of providing the necessary health, social, educational and other interventions for the child, and having financial means to support the child.

Applicants are required to submit medical reports as part of the assessment process operated by the HSE. An applicant’s BMI is one of a range of factors which may be contained in the medical report.

Youth Services Provision

225. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the community run youth service for Cabra, Dublin, is being put at risk because her Department has not signed off on the funding allocation for 2013 and that independent auditors have advised the community board of management that they are unable to sign off on the youth service’s accounts and budgets because her Department has not approved funding for 2013; when her Department will make a further decision on finding; the youth services in Dublin for which she has approved funding; the ones that are still pending; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19470/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department supports the delivery of a range of youth work programmes and services for all young people, including those from disadvantaged communities, by the voluntary youth sector. These schemes include the Youth Service Grant Scheme, the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young People’s Facilities and Services Fund Rounds 1 and 2, Local Drug Task Force Projects and certain other provisions including the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme and Youth Information Centres. Funding of €53.173m has been provided to my Department for the provision of youth services in 2013.

My Department notified all grant administering agencies of the 2013 funding allocations on the 19 February last. However, in view of the reduction in funding in recent years due to the challenging fiscal situation, grant administering agencies/bodies, who administer the funding on behalf of my Department, were afforded the flexibility to make recommendations to reconfigure the allocations based on their local knowledge and expertise in relation to the projects in their respective areas. In the case of the Cabra for Youth Service the City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB) who are the grant administering agency for the Dublin City area made such recommendations to my Department. These recommendations were considered and approved by my Department on the 21 March. Letters in relation to the 2013 funding allocations have now issued to the projects in the Dublin City area.

Cabra for Youth is in receipt of funding under the Young People’s Facilities and Services

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Fund (Rounds 1 and 2). Funding amounting to €213,364 has been allocated in 2013 and the organisation has been notified accordingly.

Missing Children

226. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in relation to the European Wide Missing Children's Hotline 116000, if the proposed move of the missing children's hotline from a pilot basis to a full time 24/7 operational basis will take place as planned in May 2013; if her Department has any plans to make funding available for the national promotion and advertisement of this hotline; if she will make a commitment to have this hotline fully operational here before the end of our Presidency of the European Union; and if she will call on all other Member States to follow our example. [19476/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The 116000 Missing Children Hotline is operated by the ISPCC in liaison with a cross-sectoral Project Team, chaired by my Department.

I am delighted to confirm that the phased implementation of the service, which commenced in December 2012, operating on a reduced hours pilot basis, has now become a full-time 24/7 service since Monday the 22nd of April 2013.

In addition I can confirm that:

- The 116000 Missing Children Hotline service will be officially launched in Ireland on the 5th of June 2013.

- Memoranda of understanding between the ISPCC and the HSE, my Department and the Gardaí, respectively were finalised in advance of the commencement of the pilot in December 2012.

- The funding received from both the EU Daphne fund and from my Department includes, in the establishment costs, the national promotion and advertisement of this Hotline service.

I am also pleased to inform the Deputy that, Ireland is co-hosting an EU conference on Missing Children, in Brussels on the 4th of June 2013, at which all EU countries will be encouraged to fully roll out a 24/7 Missing Children Hotline service. A senior official from my Department will be in attendance.

I welcome the fact that the 116000 Missing Children Hotline is already operating in 22 EU Member States and is also available in Serbia.

Blind Welfare Allowance Applications

227. **Deputy Paudie Coffey** asked the Minister for Health when an application for blind welfare allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Waterford will be awarded;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19410/13]

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.

Prescription Charges

228. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if prescription charges apply

to persons with long term illness cards; if prescription charges apply to persons with medical cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19167/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Medical card holders are required to pay a €1.50 charge (per item) for medicines and other prescription items supplied to them by community pharmacists, subject to a cap of €19.50 per month for each person or family. Charges are not payable in respect of items supplied under the Long Term Illness Scheme. Prescription charges do not apply to children in the care of the HSE or to methadone supplied to patients participating in the Methadone Treatment Scheme.

Substance Misuse

229. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the number of alcohol related deaths that occurred here over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19174/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The National Substance Misuse Strategy Steering Group reported that between 2004 and 2008 there were 4,321 alcohol-related deaths due to either alcohol poisoning or deaths in people who were alcohol-dependent. The Health Research Board report *‘Drug Related Deaths and Deaths among Drug Users in Ireland, 2010 Figures from the National Drug-Related Deaths Index’* published in January 2013, reports that 142 and 147 people died from alcohol poisoning in 2009 and 2010 respectively; it also reported that alcohol accounted for 41% of all deaths from drug poisoning from 2004-2010.

Orthodontic Service Provision

230. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health when funding will be made available through the Health Service Executive to the Orthodontic unit of Our Lady’s Hospital, Navan, County Meath, to allow them to treat grade four orthodontic cases and below; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19180/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE provides orthodontic treatment to patients based on their level of clinical need. An individual’s access to orthodontic treatment is determined against a set of clinical guidelines and priority is given to patients with greatest needs. The HSE has been asked to examine the specific query raised by the Deputy and to reply to him as soon as possible.

Health Services

231. **Deputy Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the frequency of contact between the Health Service Executive and a person (details supplied) in County Leitrim: if he will instruct the HSE to reduce the level of contact it has with this person in view of the fact that it is affecting their health; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19193/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Cochlear Implants

232. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the progress made on the in-

roduction of a bilateral cochlear implant programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19198/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Since the national cochlear implant programme commenced seventeen years ago, over 700 patients have received cochlear implants. I am advised that, in 2012, ninety cochlear implants were carried out with 42 children receiving implants and 48 adults. In addition to providing the surgical services, the programme provides a comprehensive assessment service to potential candidates and a rehabilitative service to those actually implanted.

In 2009 a National Review of Audiology Services was carried out by the HSE, to examine the services provided to children and adults nationwide, and to formulate a national plan for the services. The report of the National Audiology Review Group, published by the HSE in 2011, provides the blueprint for the planning, development and delivery of HSE audiology services, from new-born screening to assessment and management of adults and children with hearing problems, including cochlear implantation. Two of the main recommendations in the report include the national rollout of a universal new-born hearing screening programme and the establishment of a bone anchored hearing aid programme. The report also included a recommendation that continued ring-fenced financial support be provided for the cochlear implant programme but at levels which allow for simultaneous bilateral implantation for children.

The HSE is working closely with Beaumont Hospital to progress plans for both simultaneous and sequential bilateral implantation. The development of the service will require additional resources for Beaumont and these plans will be progressed through the HSE 2014 Estimates process.

Cochlear Implants

233. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he has scheduled a meeting with representatives of the Happy New Ear campaign; when this meeting will take place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19199/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Unfortunately due to a very busy schedule of Government and Departmental business, I regret that I was not in a position to accede to this organisation's recent request for a meeting. However the Minister of State, Ms Kathleen Lynch TD, has indicated that she will meet with Happy New Ear and the group will be contacted shortly in this regard.

Medical Card Withdrawals

234. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to any incident where a medical card was withdrawn without any notice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19200/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I have asked the Health Service Executive for a report on the issue raised by the Deputy. I will revert to the Deputy on the matter as soon as possible.

Medical Card Appeals

235. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an appeal against the decision to refuse an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19201/13]

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. The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

Medical Certificate Applications

236. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health when an application for a primary medical certificate in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 13, will be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19208/13]

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 Expenditure

237. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if any of his Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19217/13]

238. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide the month by month profile for his Department's 2013 capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19233/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 237 and 238 together.

None of my Department's 2012 capital allocation was used for current expenditure.

My Department's capital allocation for 2013 is €16m. The following table shows the 2013 capital allocation profile.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
€m											
0.033	0.040	0.945	1.040	1.540	1.540	2.540	1,540	1.540	1.540	1.540	2.162

Mental Health Services Provision

239. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health in relation to the filling of the 414 posts for community mental health services committed to in the Health Service Executive National Service Plan 2012, the number of these positions that have been filled by existing HSE staff members; the action being taken regarding the back filling of the positions these staff members have vacated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19300/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): 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

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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, in line with *A Vision for Change*.

As at 5th April, 384 of the 414 posts approved in 2012 have either been filled, are under offer or awaiting clearance. The remaining posts will be filled as soon as possible.

In relation to the specific issues 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.

Mental Health Services Provision

240. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health in relation to the occupational therapists appointed in 2012 and 2013 to community mental health teams, if he will indicate if these newly appointed staff are receiving supervision from a senior professional from within their discipline who is trained in the area of work being supervised in line with the Health Service Executive's guidance framework for health and social care professionals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19301/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Crisis Pregnancy Services

241. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm for each year over the past ten years the number of women that have availed of services in State funded crisis pregnancy clinics to obtain information on abortion in the UK; the number of women that have subsequently travelled outside the jurisdiction for the purpose of procuring an abortion; the number of these that can be said to be on the basis of a risk to the life of the mother from suicide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19304/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The specific information requested by the Deputy is not readily available. However I have asked the Health Service Executive to supply this information to me and I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Abortion Services

242. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm for each year over the past 20 years the number of pregnancy terminations that have been carried out in this jurisdiction on the basis of the law as it stands; if he will specify the number of cases relying on the suicide grounds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19305/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department is examining this request and will be in touch in due course.

Crisis Pregnancy Services

243. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Health the amount of funding per annum to all State funded crisis pregnancy advice clinics over the past 10 years; the conditions that pertain to their funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19306/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the Deputy's query regarding

State funding of crisis pregnancy counselling services, the specific information requested by the Deputy is not readily available. However I have asked the Health Service Executive to supply this information to me and I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Domestic Violence Policy

244. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider a submission from an organisation (details supplied) about the rationalisation of health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19310/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In 2010 the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence was published. It aims to provide a framework for sustainable intervention to prevent and effectively respond to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and is led by Cosc which is the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence. The HSE subsequently published its own Policy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence. The principal actions are in line with the National Strategy. The HSE's policy states that a health-focused analysis of violence is crucial, not only because the consequences of such violence require a significant amount of healthcare system resources, but most importantly because the health care system is often the first route through which victims seek to access supports. Nationally the HSE funds 42 frontline domestic violence service providers. 20 of these provide refuge accommodation and this number has risen from 15 since 2000. The services provide a wide range of supports such as crisis refuge, advocacy and counselling and were funded to the amount of €13.465 Million in 2012. In relation to the specific issue raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Health Services

245. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 248 of 17 April 2013, if he will specify the person in the Health Service Executive that will be dealing with the person's case (details supplied) in view of the fact that this situation has been on-going for a considerable amount of time with the H.S.E. not responding to my correspondence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19311/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Help Service Provision

246. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if an increase in home help assistance is available to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare whose home help has recently been reduced to one hour per week; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19331/13]

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.

Disability Support Services

247. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health with reference to mobility allowances and motorised transport grants, his plans for provision of services to persons who live

with cystic fibrosis; if the criteria will take specific account of lives conditioned by cystic fibrosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19338/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): A special Project Group, which is independently chaired, has been established to seek an alternative method to provide for the priority transport needs of people in a manner that does not run counter to the Equal Status Acts. The Group, who will report to Government next month, have met four times, with the next meeting scheduled for 29th April. The results of the review will be presented to the Government before any final decisions are made on future arrangements. At this stage, I am not in a position to pre-empt the outcome of the review or the decision of the Government.

Orthodontic Service Waiting Lists

248. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in Dublin 11 will receive orthodontic treatment from the Health Service Executive and much needed braces in view of the fact that a delay in treatment will mean that this child will require extensive invasive surgery at a later date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19339/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE provides orthodontic treatment to patients based on their level of clinical need. An individual's access to orthodontic treatment is determined against a set of clinical guidelines and priority is given to patients with greatest needs. The HSE has been asked to examine the specific query raised by the Deputy and to reply to her as soon as possible.

Medical Card Data

249. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health the amount that was recouped from EU member states for the awarding of medical cards to persons under EU regulation 883/04 in each year from 2010 to 2012; if he will provide the breakdown by member State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19340/13]

250. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 226 and 227 of 6 March the way in which his Department knows how to recoup costs of medical cards awarded under EU Regulation 883/04 if the Primary Care Reimbursement Service of the HSE does not track the details of those eligible under these regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19341/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 249 and 250 together.

The amounts received by Ireland in respect of reimbursement of healthcare costs provided under Regulation (EC) No 883/2004, for the years in question are:

2010 - €320,000,000;

2011 - €270,000,000;

2012 - €220,000,000.

All the above monies were received from the United Kingdom. Ireland's primary interaction is with the United Kingdom with whom it operates a bilateral healthcare reimbursement agreement, covering such persons as temporary visitors between the two countries, pensioners of one country and their dependants residing in the other country, and the dependant families

of persons employed in the other country. Under the terms of the agreement net liability between the two countries is calculated on a lump sum basis rather than an individual basis. The payment made in any one year is based on an estimate of the number of persons falling within categories eligible for reimbursement and for whom each country is liable and an estimate of the average cost of providing healthcare treatment. Payment is made following discussions and agreement between the two administrations. Payments are made in advance and are subject to final settlement once all necessary statistical and financial information is complete. Total payments in any one year can relate to both final settlements in respect of previous years' liabilities and advance payments in respect of the current year. Ireland has had waiver and bilateral agreements with many member states whereby such costs are mutually waived. Some of these agreements have been terminated in recent years. In view of this and of the increased numbers availing of services since the EU was expanded the HSE is putting in place measures to enable it to commence the issuing of claims for reimbursement of costs to the relevant competent states in the future.

Medical Card Data

251. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health the number of Irish citizens over the age of 60 who have worked in other EU countries but retired to Ireland with a contributory pension from another EU country that are in receipt of non-means tested medical cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19342/13]

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. The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

Medical Card Data

252. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health the number of EU citizens that are in receipt of non-means tested medical cards here under EU Regulation 883/04; if he will provide a breakdown by country and further outline the information the PCRS of the HSE holds on these recipients such as age and nationality; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19343/13]

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. The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

253. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if he approached the British

National Health Service to explore if there are further economies of scale or efficiency savings that might be achieved on the cost of medicines by pooling buying and resources with the Health Service Executive. [19352/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The major share of HSE expenditure on drugs and medicines is in respect of items supplied under the GMS and community drug schemes. The drugs and medicines are actually purchased by community pharmacists who are in turn recouped by the HSE. As the drugs are purchased by individual pharmacists with no direct input by the HSE, there is no scope for the type of bulk purchasing envisaged by the Deputy.

In recent years, a number of changes to the pricing and reimbursement system have been successfully introduced in Ireland. These have resulted in reductions in the prices of thousands of medicines. 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 and the HSE have 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. Under this Agreement, from 1 November 2012, the HSE will only reimburse generic products which have been priced at 50% or less of the initial price of an originator medicine. In the event that an originator medicine is priced at less than 50% of its initial price the HSE will require a generic price to be priced below the originator price. This represents a significant structural change in generic drug pricing and should lead to an increase in the generic prescribing rate.

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 scheduled for Report Stage today, 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. This legislation will promote price competition among suppliers and ensure that lower prices are paid for these medicines resulting in further savings for both taxpayers and patients.

Cochlear Implants

254. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health when he will make the necessary funding available in order that both ears can benefit from cochlear implants to avoid problems caused by one implant breaking; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19360/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Since the national cochlear implant programme commenced seventeen years ago, over 700 patients have received cochlear implants. I am advised that, in 2012, ninety cochlear implants were carried out with 42 children receiving implants and 48 adults. In addition to providing the surgical services, the programme provides a comprehensive assessment service to potential candidates and a rehabilitative service to those actually implanted.

In 2009 a National Review of Audiology Services was carried out by the HSE, to examine the services provided to children and adults nationwide, and to formulate a national plan for the services. The report of the National Audiology Review Group, published by the HSE in 2011, provides the blueprint for the planning, development and delivery of HSE audiology services, from new-born screening to assessment and management of adults and children with hearing problems, including cochlear implantation. Two of the main recommendations in the report include the national rollout of a universal new-born hearing screening programme and the establishment of a bone anchored hearing aid programme. The report also included a recommendation that continued ring-fenced financial support be provided for the cochlear implant programme but at levels which allow for simultaneous bilateral implantation for children.

The HSE is working closely with Beaumont Hospital to progress plans for both simultaneous and sequential bilateral implantation. The development of the service will require additional resources for Beaumont and these plans will be progressed through the HSE 2014 Estimates process.

Hospital Waiting Lists

255. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine the case of a person (details supplied) in County Meath awaiting an urgent hip replacement surgery, who requires this surgery in order that he may be allowed home from temporary care in a residential nursing home. [19382/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): 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, which has recently been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to this particular query raised by the Deputy, I have asked the Health Service Executive to investigate the situation and respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Research Funding

256. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide funding from the Health Research Board for research into the treatment of Rett Syndrome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19423/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Health Research Board (HRB) is a statutory body under the aegis of the Department of Health. The HRB is the lead agency in Ireland supporting and funding health research. It provides funding, maintains health information systems, and conducts research linked to national health priorities. The aim is to improve people's health, build health research capacity, and make a significant contribution to Ireland's knowledge economy.

The Health Research Board strategy supports three broad research areas:

- applied biomedical and clinical research
- population health sciences research
- health services research

Within these areas the HRB funds a range of scheme types from PhD scholars programmes, through post-doctoral and health professional fellowships to larger programme awards and support for infrastructure.

The HRB does not ring-fence funding for any particular type of disease or disorder. It does not exclude any field of health research once it meets the HRB's criteria .

Applications for HRB funding derive from bottom-up, open, competitive calls. This means that the idea for the research topic, whether it is for a particular disease area or linked to health services delivery, comes from the researcher. All proposals are evaluated by rigorous international peer review which focuses on the quality of the proposal, track record of the applicant, quality of the research environment, as well as potential outcomes and impacts. This process is very important for ensuring independence and maintaining high standards in the research that the HRB funds. Research proposals deemed to be excellent and in line with the HRB's strategic areas are ranked and matched against the available budget.

The HRB has developed a co-funding arrangement with the Medical Research Charities Group (MRCG) , whereby it can support research into rare diseases and disorders. Each year the MRCG invites proposals for research in diseases and disorders of interest to its members and the HRB manages the rigorous evaluation of these applications through its peer review process to ensure their quality. This partnership commits over €2M in funding each year to this scheme.

HSE Funding

257. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will rescind the decision taken by the Health Service Executive to either wholly or partly stop the issue of a

research grant provided by his Department to the ISQSH via the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19441/13]

258. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will advise where the funding for the ISQSH research grant has gone, along with the funds for other organisations such as the Irish Patients' Association, amounting in excess of €300k; if these funds have been transferred back to his Department or if the HSE plans to use them for other purposes; if so, the areas that have received these funds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19442/13]

259. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if a value for money review or a cost benefit analysis was undertaken in advance of the decision to cut funding to ISQSH; the criteria used; if he will make available a copy of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19443/13]

260. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the reason a new non independent organisation (details supplied) has been established within the Health Service Executive despite the existence and work of ISQSH; the reason the ISQSH was not merged with the ISQSH with another suitable organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19444/13]

261. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the reason the Health Service Executive has decided to use the NHS/PICKER tool despite the existence of established resources; the cost to secure the PICKER tool; the reason they did not seek to buy a licence for use from the ISQSH for the tools they have developed that are suitable for Irish healthcare; the reason the HSE is currently in the process of seeking advice and information from a person (details supplied) in the NHS rather than sources available in the ISQSH; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19445/13]

262. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the reason he did not prioritise the retention of an independent organisation like the ISQSH and other independent organisations rather than internalising their work competency within the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19446/13]

263. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if there was any attempt made to reassign work from overworked areas in hospitals such as patient complaints analysis, patient feedback and patient experience and to give same to dedicated specialised organisations such as the ISQSH who have shown they can do the work at a more economical price than the Health Service Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19447/13]

264. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the reason there was no discussion with ISQSH prior to the decision to withdraw funding; the further reason the ISQSH was not given the opportunity to receive less funding as opposed to no funding at all; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19448/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 257 to 264, inclusive, together.

Funding decisions in relation to the funding of the Irish Society for Quality and Safety in Healthcare are proper to the Health Service Executive (HSE), as appropriate to its holding of the Health Vote. I have arranged to have the Deputy's questions referred to the HSE for attention and a more detailed response.

Hospital Trusts

265. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn

to the concerns expressed by the Master of the Rotunda Hospital about the Project Plan for the establishment of Acute Hospital Groups and the future of the Rotunda Hospital in this regard; if he accepts that there is an existing successful 30 year partnership between the Rotunda and the Mater at clinical level and that this is delivering best patient outcomes; his views on whether mothers' lives would be unnecessarily put at risk if high risk patients needed to be brought to an adult acute hospital which was significantly further away than the Mater; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19449/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): A key stepping stone to the introduction of Universal Health Insurance will be to develop independent not-for-profit hospital trusts in which all hospitals will function as part of an integrated group. As a first step on that journey, hospitals will be aligned within groups on an administrative basis. The rationale behind the establishment of hospital groups and trusts is to support increased operational autonomy and accountability for hospital services in a way that will drive the service reforms and provide the maximum possible benefit to patients.

It is well recognised that the Rotunda Hospital provides leadership in maternity services obstetrics, midwifery, neonatology and gynaecology services to all of north Dublin and the north-east. Strong clinical links with the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, including joint consultant appointments, are a fundamental support to the work of the Rotunda, and this will continue in any configuration in which the Rotunda is required to operate. It is neither intended nor anticipated that the Rotunda will be constrained by being positioned within a particular group. As well as its long standing links with the Mater, which can and should be retained, it would also be appropriate for the Rotunda to establish links with other hospitals to meet its future aspirations for sub-specialty development and to expand and consolidate the links which currently exist.

The KPMG Independent Review of Maternity and Gynaecology Services in the Greater Dublin, which was completed in 2008, 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. The intention has been that the National Maternity Hospital should 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.

Hospital Staff

266. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole time equivalent posts currently filled at Waterford Regional Hospital; the number of these whole time equivalent posts filled at Waterford Regional Hospital at the end of 2010, 2011 and 2012; the current approved employment ceiling in Waterford Regional Hospital; if it is due to be increased in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19474/13]

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 its fiscal and budgetary targets. The Health Sector must make its contribution to that reduction. However, the HSE

can make staff appointments once it remains within its overall employment ceiling and has the financial resources to do so. 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.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

267. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Health the reason insulin pumps are not available at Waterford Regional Hospital for children suffering with type 1 diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19475/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Eligibility

268. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied that the funding available for the fair deal nursing home support scheme for eligible residents support scheme of nursing homes is sufficient to meet the ongoing demand; if he will clarify the issue of the Health Service Executive creating a new placement list for applicants; if this list is another term for a waiting list; if he will give an assurance that the current fair deal scheme will operate on the basis of meeting the demand in a timely fashion and ensure the continuation of this scheme will serve the purpose of making long term nursing home care accessible and affordable [19477/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): At end-February, it was taking an average of 27 days from the date that an application is determined for funding to issue under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme. The HSE makes every effort to match available funding to demand by releasing funding on a weekly basis. However, the total amount available for the Scheme is capped at €974m for 2013. As of now it is unclear when that limit will be reached, as this depends on the rate at which applications are received during the year. The position will be monitored on an on-going basis and every effort will be made to manage the funds that are available in the most effective way possible.

As a temporary measure, in order to relieve particular pressures in the Emergency Departments of certain acute hospitals, the HSE has suspended the normal chronological order for the release of Nursing Homes Support Scheme funding. Normal arrangements will be restored as soon as possible.

Services for People with Disabilities

269. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will support a person (details supplied) in County Offaly regarding support services for adults with autism. [19480/13]

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.

Hospice Services

270. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will support a matter (details supplied) in Dublin 9 regarding hospital transport. [19481/13]

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.

Departmental Oversight Committees

271. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 235 of 17 April 2013, if he will detail the full composition of the oversight committee he established to construct abortion legislation; the exact membership of that committee; the chair of the committee; the dates of the meetings of the committee which have taken place; the names of those present at each of those meetings; the number of further meetings envisaged by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19482/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The composition of the Oversight Committee is as follows: Minister for Health – Dr James Reilly; Minister of State at the Department of Health – Mr. Alex White; Minister of State at the Department of Health – Ms. Kathleen Lynch; Secretary General – Dr. Ambrose McLoughlin; Chief Medical Officer – Dr. Tony Holohan; Social Inclusion Unit PO – Ms. Geraldine Luddy. The purpose of this Committee is:

- To establish and maintain a clear mechanism for internal communications between the Social Inclusion Unit, senior management in the Department and the Ministers in the Department of Health.

- To ensure that the Ministers in the Department of Health are regularly updated on the progress achieved in the drafting of the legislation.

Five meetings of this Committee have taken place to date, on 24th and 29th January and 31st January, and 5th and 19th February. Myself, Minister of State White, Dr. Ambrose McLoughlin, Dr. Tony Holohan, and Ms. Geraldine Luddy attended all the meetings. Minister of State Lynch attended the meetings of 29th January, and 5th and 19th February. Ministerial advisers also attended these meetings from time to time. No date has yet been set for future meetings of this Committee.

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

272. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason there was no consultant in emergency medicine on duty at the Mercy University Hospital Cork on 22 March 2013; the reason the Mercy University Hospital Cork came off call, which resulted in an increased volume of emergencies for the accident and emergency department at Cork University Hospital; the criteria used for taking the Mercy University Hospital off call; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19485/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Sports Funding

273. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding a grant to a sports club (details supplied) in County Meath. [19472/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): Clubs in non-disadvantaged areas were required to have 15% in available own funding toward the total cost of the project. The club referred to by the Deputy stated in their application that they had only 12.5% own funding available for the project. In addition, the club did not have title to the property at the time of application. The club were informed of these reasons by letter of 17 December 2012.

Harbour Authorities Appointments

274. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport with regards to the new Commercial Executive Officer that has been appointed to Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company, the place in which the details of the job were advertised; the selection process; and the amount the new officer is being paid. [19203/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Recruitment of staff is an operational matter for Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company and the company alone is responsible for the advertising and selection process. I have referred the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please contact my office if a reply is not received within ten working days.

Harbour Authorities Staff

275. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the persons, if any, employed within his Department or within the Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company to work on the Diaspora Centre project; the selection process for the job; and the salary details. [19204/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): No persons are employed within my Department to work on the Diaspora Centre project. The assignment of staff within Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company is an operational matter for the company and one in which I have no function. I have referred the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please contact my office if a reply is not received within ten working days.

Road Safety

276. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the guidelines for the placing of mobile speed cameras. [19205/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issues raised are a matter for the Department of Justice and Equality.

Departmental Expenditure

277. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if any of her Department's 2012 capital expenditure allocation was used for current expenditure purposes last year, the amount used for this purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19222/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): On 24 July, 2012, the Government decided to provide additional Public Service Obligations (PSO) funding of €36 million to CIE. Funding for such services is made available through my Department's Vote 31, by way of a payment to the National Transport Authority (NTA). This was funded in part by a reallocation of funding of €30.8m from the capital expenditure programme to current expenditure.

Departmental Expenditure

278. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide the month by month profile for his Department's 2013 capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19238/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The expected monthly spending profiles for this year's allocation are set out in the table below. The expected monthly spending profiles for this year's allocation are set out in the table below.

Jan 000	Feb 000	Mar 000	Apr 000	May 000	June 000	July 000	Aug 000	Sept 000	Oct 000	Nov 000	Dec 000	Total 000
14,219	20,012	30,974	57,934	59,850	69,729	72,206	78,774	92,489	83,994	107,920	211,899	900,000

Postal Services

279. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will clarify aviation rules that make the sending of sealed electronic equipment phones, games consoles and so on illegal to send for repair in Britain via An Post and thus through air freight; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that these same items can be bought online and are shipped into the country via air freight on a daily basis, and that those who wish to avail of a guarantee from the makers (details supplied) cannot interfere with the device or risk losing the warranty and that they demand that they be sent to their repair companies more often than not in Britain; if this restriction is on all air freight operators; the reason when a postee unaware of the restrictions sends such an item, that the package is destroyed instead of being returned to them. [19308/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Civil aviation security in Ireland is governed by Regulations (EC) Nos. 300/2008 and 185/2010 which have been adopted into Ireland's National Civil Aviation Security Programme. The Annex to Regulation (EC) No. 185/2010 contains a list of items that are prohibited from being carried in the hold of an aircraft. Under EU and national aviation security provisions, there is no prohibition on the carriage of any of the above-mentioned items.