

Written Answers.

The following are questions tabled by Members for written response and the ministerial replies as received on the day from the Departments [unrevised].

Questions Nos. 1 to 9, inclusive, answered orally.

Prescription Charges

10. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health if he will reverse his proposals to increase prescription charges to €2.50 with a cap of €25. [48008/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As announced in Budget 2014, it has become necessary to increase the prescription charge due to the very difficult and challenging economic environment which requires the Government to achieve additional savings in health expenditure with €666 million of savings targeted in 2014. The increase in prescription charges will account for €43 million of this target. The Government is committed to achieving these savings while protecting front line services to the most vulnerable to the greatest extent possible.

Medical card holders will be required to pay a €2.50 charge per item for medicines and other prescription items supplied to them by community pharmacists, subject to a cap of €25 per month for each person or family. 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. These new rates will be effective from 1 December 2013.

Questions Nos. 11 and 12 answered orally.

Health Services Expenditure

13. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health if a workable system for the management of the health services budget is in place, as recommended in the Odgen report. [42414/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): A Review of Financial Management Systems in the Irish Health Service, commonly known as the Ogden Report, was published in 2012.

The review was commissioned by the Secretary General of the Department of Health. Its overall intention was to review the state of the financial management system in place in the health sector in Ireland at the time in the context of the serious overruns projected to occur in 2012, the continuation of a challenging financial environment for the foreseeable future and the radical reforms envisioned in the Programme for Government.

Recommendations

The report made a number of recommendations to improve the financial management process within the HSE, with particular reference to managing the transition phase that the health sector was undergoing. The recommendations were grouped into 3 distinct areas: Improving Financial Performance; Policy Considerations; and Effective Transitioning (Managing the Change).

New Integrated Financial Management System

The Strategic Framework for Reform of the Health Services “Future Health” identified, as one of the key challenges, the need for an integrated financial management system. The current financial management system in the HSE was largely inherited from the health boards, the Eastern Regional Health Authority and the other bodies which were subsumed into the HSE. It has evolved over many years as the structure of the organisation has changed. However it is acknowledged, that given the new requirements for financial management and comprehensive financial reporting, the current operating model is inadequate for its purpose. The Department of Health is committed to working with the HSE to ensure the development and roll out of a comprehensive financial management system as a matter of priority.

As part of the process of further strengthening the financial management of the Health Service Executive independent expertise was engaged to evaluate the financial performance management system and a Finance Reform Board has been established within the HSE made up of senior management and representatives from the Departments of Health and Public Expenditure and Reform.

Current Position

The Finance Reform Board and my Department have endorsed proposals regarding the development and roll out of an integrated financial management system with my the full support and approval. Proposals for significant new projects must be approved by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform which requires a robust business case to be made. The HSE is currently finalising a business case for submission to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Mental Health Services Funding

14. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the reasons for the under-spend in the mental health services budget this year, which was specifically identified as ring-fenced funding; and the way commitments to increase staffing levels in mental health services can be fulfilled in view of the ongoing constraints in the Health Service Executive’s overall budget. [47945/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): An additional €35m was allocated in Budget 2013 for the continued development of our mental health services across a range of headings, including the further development of forensic services and community mental health teams for adults, children, older persons and mental health intellectual disability. 477 posts have been approved to implement these measures.

As at 30th September 255 posts (54%) were in the final stages of recruitment, and a further 149 (31%) were at earlier stages indicating that 85% of the posts are in the recruitment process with the balance in the HR approvals process.

There are a number of posts for which there are difficulties in identifying suitable candidates due to factors including availability of qualified candidates and geographic location. The HSE's National Recruitment Service is currently working to ensure that the remaining posts will be filled as soon as possible, from existing panels or through competition in the absence of panels, at the earliest opportunity. Options to enable more local recruitment are also being considered where this will assist in filling specific posts. I have received assurances from the HSE that the recruitment process for these new posts is being given priority within the HSE.

In relation to expenditure against the 2013 allocation of €35 million and associated 477 posts, the HSE is currently validating the position regarding the new posts filled at the end of October and will then be in a position to estimate the spend once that data is available. I will provide this information to the Deputy when it becomes available.

Hospitals Building Programme

15. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the construction of the new children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48051/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The new children's hospital project is a priority for me and for this Government. In October, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform announced that up to €250m would be available for the project from the sale of the National Lottery, adding to the €450m Exchequer funding already indented.

The National Paediatric Hospital Development Board is the body responsible for the capital project. Last August, I announced appointments to this Board to replace the transitional Board which had been in place since January this year. These appointments bring architectural, planning, procurement, engineering and construction expertise to the project. Also in August, I announced appointments to the Children's Hospital Group Board which, as client for the project, will play a key role in ensuring the new hospital is optimally designed and completed as swiftly as possible. Earlier this month, Ms Eilish Hardiman took up post as CEO of the Children's Hospital Group, and will play a central role in driving forward the integration of the three hospitals, and the project as a whole.

Prior to the commencement of construction, key elements of the project include design development, decant works for the site and planning permission. The new Board has reviewed the design team procurement process, which had been initiated in July, and decided on a change of approach based on its collective expertise and taking into account changing market conditions. While this means that the design team will be selected in Spring 2014, rather than by the end of this year as originally planned, the Board is confident there will be no delay to the project overall. Work on the review of urgent care centre configuration is at an advanced stage and I intend to bring proposals in this regard to Government shortly.

Pre-application planning discussions have commenced, a masterplan for the St. James's Hospital campus is being prepared and St. James's Hospital is working closely with the Development Board and the HSE in relation to the decant phase of the project.

Work on developing a detailed timeline is continuing, which will reflect the urgency and priority of the project and also its scale and complexity. However, at this stage, the Board is confident that construction can begin in Spring 2015.

Organ Donation

16. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that the €3 million needed to develop donor coordinators in hospitals here will be included in the 2014 health budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48062/13]

19. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that the minimum €3 million needed to develop the donor coordinators in our hospitals is allocated in the health estimates for 2014 [48007/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 16 and 19 together.

The HSE, through its National Organ Donation and Transplantation Office, in conjunction with my Department, has identified priority areas for action, including the deployment of additional donor coordinators, to enhance the organ donation and transplantation system. These proposals are being considered in the context of the Health Estimate for 2014 and the development of the HSE's National Service Plan 2014.

Primary Care Centres Expenditure

17. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health his views on the sentiments of 45 general practitioners (details supplied) who publicly stated that cuts in primary care spending are leading directly to a reduction in doctors and nurses; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that several GPs are stating that they have invested large sums in their practices with the expectation that primary care services would be at a more advanced stage by this time; if his views on whether these trends present a serious risk to patient safety; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48058/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The HSE's National Service Plan for 2013 sets out the funding allocations for this year by care group programme. It includes provision of €2,562 million in respect of the Primary Care Reimbursement Service and €400 million for Primary Care services. This is an increase of 1.7% and 7.6% respectively on the 2012 figures.

Successful transformation of our health services requires a corresponding transformation of the existing funding model. The first stage in transforming this funding model is to clarify funding streams through the creation of directorates and corresponding programme based budgets. As part of this process, a Primary Care Directorate was established within the HSE in 2013. This directorate will oversee the development and strengthening of primary care.

In 2013, Primary Care funding of €20 million, nationally, is being invested to support the recruitment of prioritised front-line primary care team posts and to enhance the capacity of the primary care sector. 264.5 additional Primary Care posts, including 72 Public Health Nurses and 40.5 Registered General Nurses, have been approved. The filling of these posts is at an advanced stage. From 1st July 2010, the GP trainee intake increased from 120 to 157 training places per year, in line with GP workforce requirements.

Earlier this year, a review was carried under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Act 2009 in relation to the operation, effectiveness and impact of the amounts and rates payable to certain health professionals under the relevant Regulations. Having carefully considered the submissions made during the consultation process, the Minister for Health

decided to make an overall reduction of 7.5% in fees and allowances payable to GPs under the GMS and other schemes. Under the FEMPI legislation, the Minister for Health is required to carry out a review of the operation, effectiveness and impact of the amounts and rates fixed under the regulations each year. This will involve a full consultation with stakeholders in 2014.

The development of primary care is central to the Government's objective to deliver a high quality, integrated and cost effective health system. The development of primary care centres, through a combination of public and private investment, will facilitate the delivery of multi-disciplinary primary health care. Considerable progress has been made already in the delivery of primary care centres and 32 centres have opened since May 2011.

Since 2012, primary care infrastructure has been approved and is underway at 15 locations through refurbishment, extension of suitable properties or through new build. Construction is underway at 6 locations and planning permission has been granted at an additional 22 locations under the 'operational lease' mechanism.

The HSE is working with the National Development Finance Agency to progress the PCC Public Private Partnership programme. Planning applications for the PCC sites have been lodged recently or will be shortly.

I am aware that many GPs have invested in their practices. This, coupled with the increased investment in Primary Care by this Government will provide enhanced, safer services for patients.

Medical Card Eligibility

18. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health if he will reverse the decision to exclude the first €50 per week of travel to work costs, the cost of home improvement loans and child care costs from allowance expenses for assessment for medical cards-general practitioner visit cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48063/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As part of the Budget 2013 savings measures, payments on a home improvement loan and a €50 per week allowance for a car were excluded from the standard means test assessment. These changes took effect from April last.

For clarity, the exclusion from travel to work costs relates to removing the weekly amount of €50 allowed to cover standing charges, such as depreciation or other running costs, used when considering travel to work costs as an outgoing where public transport is not available or suitable and a car is required. This means that the HSE will continue to consider the standard mileage costs or public transport costs when assessing eligibility.

Expenses for childcare costs have not been excluded from the means test assessment. There are no proposals to reverse the changes introduced.

Question No. 19 answered with Question No. 16.

General Practitioner Services

20. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health the way he intends to fulfill his pledge to have free general practitioner care for all by 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48055/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Government is committed to introducing, on a phased basis, a universal GP service within its term of office, as set out in the Programme for Government and the Future Health strategy framework. As announced in the Budget, it has been decided to commence the roll-out of a universal GP service by providing all children aged 5 and under with access to a GP service without fees. This will mean that almost half of the population will have access to GP services without fees. The Government is providing new, additional funding of €37 million to meet the cost of this measure.

The introduction of a universal GP service constitutes a fundamental element in the Government's health reform programme. The current Government is the first in the history of the State to have committed itself to implementing a universal GP service for the entire population. A well functioning health system should provide equal access to healthcare for its patients on the basis of health needs, rather than ability to pay. The principles of universality and equity of access mean that all residents in Ireland should be entitled to access a GP services that is free at the point of use.

The Cabinet Committee on Health and Children has discussed the issues relating to the roll-out of the universal GP service and has agreed that a number of alternative options should be set out with regard to the phased implementation of a universal GP service without fees. As part of this work, consideration is being given to the approaches, timing and financial implications of the phased implementation of this universal primary care health service as a first step towards the introduction of Universal Health Insurance. A range of options are under consideration with a view to bringing developed proposals to Government shortly.

Symphysiotomy Report

21. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the progress he has made since 26 September in ensuring justice and truth for the survivors of symphysiotomy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48068/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I received the independent report by Professor Oonagh Walsh on Symphysiotomy in Ireland at the end of May 2013. I met the three support groups representing the women concerned in August 2013. At that meeting, I acknowledged that this was a complex issue about which Government had not yet finished its deliberations. A number of those present described their personal experiences and I acknowledged the adverse effects endured by many women and their families as a result of symphysiotomy. In this context I proposed to appoint a judge to meet with the women in order to facilitate decisions on how best to bring closure for them.

My officials are actively considering this issue and I intend bringing preliminary proposals to Government in the coming weeks. I intend to publish the Walsh report when I have received Government approval regarding how best to proceed in relation to this issue.

My priority continues to be to ensure that the women who have had this procedure have their health needs comprehensively and professionally met. In this regard, the HSE provides a range of services to women who may be experiencing any adverse effects as a result of undergoing this procedure. These services include the provision of medical cards, the availability of independent clinical advice and the organisation of individual pathways of care and the arrangement of appropriate follow-up.

HIQA Investigations

22. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if he will order a Health Information and Quality Authority investigation into the circumstances of the care of a person (details supplied) in line with the HIQA investigation into the death of Savita Halappanavar. [48053/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I would like in the first instance to offer my sympathies to the family involved in this very unfortunate case.

I have been advised that the circumstances surrounding this patient's death were investigated by the HSE under the National Incident Protocol following which 11 actions were recommended. I have been informed by the HSE that the Rotunda Hospital has now implemented all 11 recommendations.

I am advised by my Department's Chief Medical Officer that it is not necessary nor is it appropriate for me to request the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) to undertake investigations in a case such as this which has been adequately investigated under the HSE's incident management procedures.

It is important to state that maternal and peri-natal health statistics indicate that Ireland continues to be a very safe country for a woman to give birth and our safety record compares favourably with other developed countries.

Dental Services Provision

23. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he has considered reversing some of the cuts to the dental treatment benefit scheme and the dental treatment services scheme since 2010 in view of reports that considerably fewer adults are visiting their dentists and are putting off dental treatment until it is absolutely necessary. [47944/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Funding for the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) has been capped at the 2008 level of €63 million. There are no immediate plans to reverse the changes to the Scheme in the current budgetary climate. The HSE prioritises for treatment patients with special needs, high risk patients and those who have greater clinical needs and will continue to monitor the operation of the DTSS to ensure the most beneficial, effective and efficient use of available resources.

Responsibility for the Dental Treatment Benefit Scheme rests with my colleague, the Minister for Social Protection.

Maternal Mortality

24. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the reason the Health Service Executive and its national director of quality and patient safety continue to quote the undercounted figures on maternal mortality collected by the Central Statistics Office in order to claim that our figures are among the best internationally, while not using the actual figures on maternal mortality collected by Maternal Death Enquiry Ireland, the officially commissioned body tasked with monitoring these figures accurately. [48054/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): International comparisons of maternal mortality are based on statistics produced by the World Health Organisation (WHO). In calculating the maternal mortality ratio (MMR), the WHO takes account of vital statistics as compiled by national statistical offices (i.e. the Central Statistics Office in the case of Ireland) but also applies a separate weighting to adjust for potential under-reporting. For most developed coun-

tries, including Ireland, the weighting factor is 1.5. The most recently published WHO statistics are based on this methodology.

As the Deputy is aware, Ireland recently implemented a Confidential Maternal Death Enquiry (MDE) system using the same model which has been in operation in the United Kingdom (UK) for many years. The first report of the MDE for Ireland was published in 2012 and covered the years 2009 to 2011. Future WHO analysis for Ireland will take account of the MDE results.

Comparison with the UK's most recent MDE shows Ireland with a ratio of 8.6 maternal deaths per 100,000 maternities (2009 to 2011) compared with 11.4 maternal deaths per 100,000 maternities (2006 to 2008) for the UK. It needs to be emphasised that Ireland and the UK are virtually unique in having fully comprehensive MDE reporting systems. The WHO recognises that international rankings of maternal mortality are, therefore, problematic given the difficulty of obtaining accurate estimates of the levels of under-reporting which exist in most countries.

Nevertheless, taking full account of the MDE results, Ireland has amongst the lowest levels of maternal mortality in the developed world and this will continue to be reflected in WHO statistics. Finally, it also needs to be noted that Ireland is a small country and rare occurrences such as maternal mortality will be subject to significant fluctuations in rates where the data are based on a single year or even where data are aggregated over several years. As evidence of this, the 95% confidence limits for the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in Ireland's MDE covering a three year period (2009 to 2011) range from 4.6 to 12.4 maternal deaths per 100,000 maternities.

Health Services Reform

25. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health the timescale for the appointment of chairpersons and board members to the new hospital groupings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48060/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Report on the Establishment of Hospital Groups, which I launched on 14 May, is the most fundamental reform of the Irish acute hospital system in decades. The introduction of Hospital Groups will provide for organisational change in the first instance, giving more autonomy and better enabling the reorganisation of services in a well-planned manner. Over time, this will help to improve services and deliver better outcomes for patients.

In July, expressions of interest were invited through the Public Appointments Service for appointment as Chairpersons and members of Hospital Group Boards. Chairs have now been appointed to all seven Hospital Groups. CEOs are in place for three of the Groups, and the process of recruiting CEOs for the remaining four Groups will shortly commence, in consultation with Chairpersons, through the Public Appointments Service. My Department will also enter into discussion with the Chairs with a view to appointing the remaining Board members as soon as possible.

A Strategic Advisory Group is now being established which will oversee the establishment of Hospital Groups and the subsequent reorganisation of acute hospital services. Each group of hospitals will work together as single cohesive entities managed as one, to provide acute care for patients in their area, integrating with community and primary care. This will maximise the amount of care delivered locally, whilst ensuring complex care is safely provided in larger hospitals. Hospital Groups will be required, within one year, to develop a strategic plan which

will outline their plans for future services within the group area and the role of hospitals within each group will be considered in detail in the context of this strategic plan.

Obesity Strategy

26. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health in view of the cost of obesity to the State, if he has a strategy for dealing with the issue. [48056/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As Minister for Health, I have made overweight and obesity a public health priority and have established a Special Action Group on Obesity (SAGO) whom I meet with regularly to progress the obesity agenda. The Special Action Group on Obesity comprises representatives from the Departments of Health, Children and Youth Affairs, Education and Skills, the Health Service Executive, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, *Safefood* and other key stakeholders, to examine and progress a number of issues to address the problem of obesity. The range of measures being implemented by my Department seeks to promote a healthy lifestyle, to encourage people to make healthier food choices, to become more active and take the first steps towards reducing obesity.

The Special Action Group on Obesity is concentrating on a range of measures including actions such as: calorie on menus in restaurants, how best to support healthy eating choices, the supply of healthy food products in vending machines, the detection and treatment of obesity, healthy eating guidelines and the promotion of physical activity. As one of the measures specifically designed to combat Childhood Obesity, on Monday 21st October, I launched the *Safefood/Healthy Ireland/HSE* three year Childhood Obesity Campaign - *Childhood Obesity: Let's take it on - one small step at a time* which is designed to create greater awareness among parent's about the threat of childhood overweight and obesity and provide practical tips to help address the problem with the ultimate aim and effecting behaviour change.

I also tasked SAGO with establishing a sub-committee to investigate and develop a range of options around pricing and other mechanisms in order to reduce consumption of foods and drinks from the top-shelf of the Food Pyramid (as per the Department of Health's Healthy Eating Guidelines) as these foods and drinks are not necessary for health. The sub-committee's report and recommendations were presented to me on Wednesday, 23rd October when I attended a meeting of SAGO and an action plan is now being developed around these recommendations.

Because the issue of Childhood Obesity is of such serious concern for me I placed it centre stage of the Irish Presidency of the EU and was successful in having the EU mandated to draw up an EU Action Plan to tackle Childhood Obesity. This Plan has been drafted and will be finalised before the end of the year. SAGO will continue to liaise with other Departments and organisations in a cross-sectoral approach to further progress initiatives to help halt the rise in overweight and obesity.

Mental Health Services Funding

27. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason the programme for Government commitment to an annual ring-fenced allocation of €35 million for community health services is not being honoured in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48049/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Mental health has again succeeded in obtaining a substantial ring-fenced allocation, within the overall budget-

ary context. The current economic environment presents a significant challenge for the health system generally in delivering services, however, mental health is being treated as a priority in so far as we can.

The announcement in Budget 2014 of €20 million ringfenced for mental health is in line with a commitment in the Programme for Government to accelerate the pace of change to develop a modern, patient-centred, and recovery orientated mental health service. This further ringfenced funding for mental health means that, despite serious resource pressures overall, funding of €90 million has been made available since 2012 up to end 2014, which has been specifically ear-marked for mental health and suicide prevention.

I can confirm to the Deputy that I have been assured that the remaining €15 million which was due in 2014 for mental health will be restored in 2015. I will also be advocating for an allocation of €35 million in 2015 for mental health.

Medicinal Products Prices

28. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the reason, despite the recent introduction of generic substitution and reference pricing, the Health Service Executive is still paying up to four times as much as the NHS for some of the most commonly prescribed medicines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48066/13]

29. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied that the price paid for drugs by the Health Service Executive is comparable with those paid by national health services in other OECD countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42415/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 28 and 29 together.

The prices of drugs vary between countries for a number of reasons, including different prices set by manufacturers, different wholesale and pharmacy mark-ups, different dispensing fees and different rates of VAT. The State has introduced a series of reforms in recent years to reduce pharmaceutical prices and expenditure. These have resulted in reductions in the price of thousands of medicines. Price reductions of the order of 30% per item reimbursed have been achieved between 2009 and 2013; the average cost per items reimbursed is now running at 2001/2002 levels.

A major new deal on the cost of drugs in the State was concluded with the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA) in October 2012. 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 IPHA agreement provides that prices are referenced to the currency adjusted average price to wholesaler in the nine EU member states. The price of a range of medicines were reduced on 1 January 2013 in accordance with the agreement. The gross savings arising from this deal will be in excess of €400 million over 3 years. €210 million from the gross savings will be available to fund new drugs.

A new agreement was also reached with the Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers in Ireland (APMI), which represents the generic drugs industry. Since 1 November 2012, the HSE only reimburses generic products which are priced at 50% or less of the initial price of an originator medicine. 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 with an additional €28 million saved in 2014.

The Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, which came into operation on the 24th of June, introduces a system of generic substitution and reference pricing. 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. It is estimated that this system will yield €50 million in savings in 2014. Under the Act, the Irish Medicines Board (IMB) is responsible for the assessment for interchangeability of medicines. Generic substitution will be introduced incrementally with the IMB prioritising those medicines which will achieve the greatest savings for patients and the State. The Board is in the process of reviewing an initial 20 active substances, which equates to approximately 1,500 individual medicines. They include statins, proton pump inhibitors, angiotensin-converting-enzyme (ACE) inhibitors and angiotensin II receptor blockers.

The first List of Interchangeable Medicines, containing groups of atorvastatin products, was published by the IMB on 7th August. The second and third lists containing groups of esomeprazole and rosuvastatin products were published on 20th and 24th September respectively. Once the IMB has assessed the initial 20 priority products, then a further list of priority products will be identified and assessed by the IMB and the process will continue until all medicinal products on the reimbursable list have been assessed.

Once a List of Interchangeable Medicines is published by the IMB a two stage price reduction process gets underway. First, under the terms of the 2012 APMI Agreement, the price of all relevant products fall by 20%, e.g. atorvastatin prices were reduced from 1st September. Secondly, the legislation provides that the HSE may set a reference price for groups of interchangeable products published on the List of Interchangeable Products with a view to introducing further significant price cuts. Taking both price reductions into account, atorvastatin prices are down 70% since the introduction of generic substitution.

Reference pricing involves the setting of a common reimbursement price, or reference price, for a group of interchangeable medicines. It means that one reference price is set for each group or list of interchangeable medicines, and this is the price that the HSE will reimburse to pharmacies for all medicines in the group, regardless of the individual medicine's prices. The first reference price for atorvastatin products was implemented on 1 November 2013. Reference prices will ensure that generic prices in Ireland will fall towards European norms.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

30. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if he will address the problem of the empty and unused ward in the new West Kerry Community Hospital in Dingle, where a number of beds could be opened and thus alleviate the serious shortage of residential beds on the Dingle Peninsula; if he will make this a priority for Kerry health services in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47994/13]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

31. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his response to the claim by four hospital chief executives that there are unacceptable delays in treatment access for certain cancer patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48052/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The issues raised by the hospitals will be considered in the context of the HSE Service Plan for 2014. I wrote to the HSE on Thursday 31 October to confirm that the Executive has until 15 November to submit its Service Plan. In that letter, I also conveyed to the Executive that my overriding priority is patient safety, with the next priority being to treat patients in as timely a fashion as possible.

Clearly, the diagnosis and treatment of patients with cancer is a high priority for the HSE. I welcome the huge improvements that have been made in recent years, led by the HSE National Cancer Control Programme. It is very encouraging to note that five year relative survival for all cancers is rising and is now 56.4% for people diagnosed between 2003-2007, as compared with 49.6% for people diagnosed in 1998-2002. The Mater Hospital and St. James's Hospital are the two adult designated cancer centres among the hospitals referred to by the Deputy and according to the latest figures available (August 2013), both are in compliance with the HSE Service Plan access targets, which relate to access to breast, prostate and lung cancer clinics. With regard to paediatric cancer care, I am advised that children are treated according to international protocols and standards of care, that all care is clinically prioritised and that there are no extraordinary delays for children accessing cancer services.

Clearly 2014 will be a very challenging year for the health services. In meeting this challenge, the goal, wherever possible, is to cut the cost of services rather than the level or quality of the services delivered, and to accelerate the pace of reform. The reform programme for hospitals, as set out in *Future Health*, aims to deliver more responsive and equitable access to services for all patients; to organise public hospitals into more efficient and accountable hospital groups, which can deliver better patient care for less cost; and to ensure that smaller hospitals continue to play a key role.

Health Services Issues

32. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which it has been found possible to identify areas within the health services wherein savings can be made to ensure that the health service in general remains within budget without undermining the viability of specific areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48043/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As a result of the economic and financial crisis, the Irish public service is experiencing unprecedented reductions in spending, including the area of health. Current expenditure on healthcare fell by 10% between 2009 and 2013 and will reduce by a further €361m or 3% in 2014. Reductions in the health budget are compounded by underlying cost pressures, including substantial population growth and rising incidence of chronic disease.

In addressing the significant financial challenges faced by the health system, the focus is on actions that enhance efficiency, secure sustainability and do not compromise the overall goals of the health system. My objective is to protect frontline services by cutting the cost of services rather than cutting the services themselves. Various cost saving measures include reducing the public sector pay bill, the fees paid to professionals and payments to pharmaceutical companies.

A total of €666 million of health savings measures have been identified to meet the overall health expenditure ceiling reduction of €361 million for 2014, Programme for Government Commitments of €57 million and health service pressures of €248 million. Clearly the Health Sector will be facing serious challenges in 2014 to keep within its budgetary limits. The level of health services to be delivered within the available funding will be set out in the Health Service Executive's 2014 National Service Plan. Given the budgetary constraints on the health services in recent years, it remains a priority to focus on improving the way services are organised and delivered, and to reduce costs so as to minimise any negative effect on service provision.

The saving measures agreed by Government to be taken by my Department in order to adhere to the 2014 Expenditure Ceiling post adjustments, are set out in the Expenditure report 2014.

Medical Card Eligibility

33. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which he is satisfied regarding the availability of medical cards of a discretionary nature with particular reference to children and-or adults with special needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48044/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Under Section 45 of the Health Act 1970, as amended, persons who are unable, without due hardship, to arrange a general practitioner service for themselves or their family qualify for a medical card. There is no automatic entitlement to a medical card for persons with a specific illness or disability.

Under this legislation, the determination of eligibility for a medical card is the responsibility of the Health Service Executive. Section 45 requires the HSE to have regard to a person's, and their spouse or partner's overall financial situation in view of their reasonable expenditure. The HSE gives effect to this legislation and Government policy through its Medical Card National Assessment Guidelines.

Where a person's income is in excess of the income thresholds set out in the National Assessment Guidelines, the HSE uses its discretion to grant a medical card to a person who is unable, due to undue hardship, to arrange a GP service. In doing so, the HSE is obliged to have regard to the financial situation and expenditure of the individual and his or her dependents.

The HSE has an effective system in place for the provision of emergency medical cards for patients who are terminally ill in palliative care, or who are seriously ill and in urgent need of medical care that they cannot afford. They are issued within twenty-four hours of receipt of the required patient details and the letter of confirmation of the condition from a doctor or a medical consultant. With the exception of terminally ill patients in palliative care, the HSE issues all emergency cards on the basis that the patient is eligible for a medical card on the basis of means or undue hardship, and that the applicant will follow up with a full application within a number of weeks of receiving the emergency card. As a result, emergency medical cards are issued to a named individual, with a limited eligibility period of six months.

For persons with a terminal illness in palliative care, no means test applies. Once the terminal illness is verified, patients are given an emergency medical card for six months. Given the nature and urgency of the issue, the HSE has appropriate escalation routes to ensure that the person gets the card as quickly as possible.

I am satisfied that the HSE responds pro-actively to the variety of circumstances and complexities faced by individuals in these circumstances.

The Government is committed to introducing, on a phased basis, a universal GP service without fees within its term of office, as set out in the Programme for Government and the Future Health strategy framework. As announced in the Budget, it has been decided to commence the roll-out of a universal GP service by providing all children aged 5 and under with access to a GP service without fees. This will mean that almost half of the population will have access to GP services without fees. The Government is providing new, additional funding of €37 million to meet the cost of this measure.

The implementation of this measure will require primary legislation. The necessary administrative arrangements will be made during the course of 2014, when the specifics of the legislation are known.

The introduction of a universal GP service constitutes a fundamental element in the Government's health reform programme. The current Government is the first in the history of the State to have committed itself to implementing a universal GP service for the entire population. A well functioning health system should provide equal access to healthcare for its patients on the basis of health needs, rather than ability to pay. The principles of universality and equity of access mean that all residents in Ireland should be entitled to access GP services that are free at the point of use.

Medical Card Reviews

34. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the way the budget 2014 figure of €113 million, under the heading of probity savings for medical cards, was reached; the way he expects this cut to be made; if he has estimated the number of full, general practitioner only and discretionary medical cards that will come under this heading; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48064/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The figure for probity savings for medical cards was determined by the Government in the context of the overall framing of Budget 2014. The savings will be achieved through identifying any medical card or GP visit card holder who is not entitled to such eligibility in line with the legislation governing the schemes. Under the relevant legislation, a medical card is approved either on foot of a means assessment, which meets the current financial guidelines, or where the applicant does not meet the income guidelines but there is undue hardship in the arranging of medical services as a result of the medical or social circumstances. The HSE's National Service Plan for 2014 will outline the activity levels for 2014.

Health Services Expenditure

35. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health in view of the recent statements by four large Dublin hospitals regarding the adequacy of budgets and the safety of service and statements by senior health officials that the 2014 health budget represents a €1 billion cut, his views on the adequacy and safety of the health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48059/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The issues raised by the hospitals will be considered in the context of the HSE Service Plan for 2014. I wrote to the HSE last Thursday 31 October to confirm that the Executive has until 15 November to submit its Service Plan. In that letter, I also conveyed to the Executive that my overriding priority is patient safety, with the next priority being to treat patients in as timely a fashion as possible. Clearly 2014 will be

a very challenging year for the health services. In meeting this challenge, the goal, wherever possible, is to cut the cost of services rather than the level or quality of the services delivered, and to accelerate the pace of reform. The reform programme for hospitals, as set out in *Future Health*, aims to deliver more responsive and equitable access to services for all patients; to organise public hospitals into more efficient and accountable hospital groups, which can deliver better patient care for less cost; and to ensure that smaller hospitals continue to play a key role.

It can be difficult to achieve the necessary reform while hospitals exist in isolation from one another. The formation of Hospital Groups, which I announced last May, will allow each Group to manage their own affairs and operate with maximum autonomy. It will also ensure that the treatment required by patients is received at the most appropriate level in the most appropriate and safest setting. I have now appointed Chairs to all seven Hospital Groups, the process of recruitment of CEOs has commenced and the process of establishing a Strategic Advisory Group to oversee the reorganisation of services by Hospital Groups is underway. The overall aim is to provide efficient and effective care, as close to the patient's home as possible, with a view to improved health outcomes and satisfaction for patients.

Hospital Services

36. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health the actions he has taken to ensure that services at Letterkenny General Hospital will be restored following last summer's flash flooding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47942/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): On Friday 26 July 2013, 40% of the floor space and 70% of the functional capacity of Letterkenny General Hospital was lost. With the rapid activation of the Hospital's Major Emergency Plan, patients and staff were safely evacuated, arrangements made with other hospitals and the NAS to ensure that appropriate treatment would remain available to patients and a massive clean-up operation was commenced within hours. I am particularly grateful to the Western Trust of Northern Ireland, to Altnagelvin, Enniskillen, Sligo and Galway hospitals for their assistance and to the staff of Letterkenny General Hospital who were willingly redeployed to some of these locations to assist with patient care.

A key factor in re-establishing services was the replacement of radiology services, through the provision of a mobile CT and modular digital radiology facilities in the carpark, the outsourcing of MRI and the restoration of ultrasound capability. Modular units were also sourced for the reprovision of ED services and a phased re-opening commenced 3 weeks after the flood.

Works on Gynaecology ambulatory care were commenced within weeks and are now complete; this service has been re-commissioned. A building has been identified in the town centre for the provision of outpatient clinics; it is currently being fitted out. Work on the hospital Pharmacy has commenced and is due for completion in February 2014. Contractors have been on site from 11 November to work on the Emergency Department and Acute Medical Assessment Unit and these are to be completed in March 2014. A Multipurpose Radiology Interventional Suite, which will have greater functionality than the previous radiology facility at the hospital, has been approved by the national capital steering group and is at design stage. Project teams have also been established for services in those areas which were significantly impacted by the flooding, such as CCU, Cardiac investigations, medical records, laboratories, mortuary and staff facilities.

Ambulance Service Provision

37. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will carry out an immediate review of the adequacy of ambulance cover in the north east region and across the State in view of the recent incident when a stroke victim in Navan, County Meath, had to wait 40 minutes for an ambulance and a similar recent incident in County Cavan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48065/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Ambulance Service Response Times

38. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health his plans to improve ambulance coverage and response times throughout County Roscommon and east Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47946/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Medical Card Data

39. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the civil registration service section of the Health Service Executive to notify the medical card section of the HSE of all deaths registered with them; if this requires legislation to be passed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47948/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The HSE already has a system in place with regard to notifications of the death of medical card holders.

In 2012, the HSE introduced data sharing with the Death Events Publication Service (DEPS) operated by the General Register Office (GRO). Death events notifications (DEPS) are received by the HSE from the GRO on a weekly basis and loaded to the PCRS payment systems. Medical card eligibility is removed immediately and payments to the GP are ceased immediately.

Health Insurance Prices

40. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the measures he will put in place to support the health insurance market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48048/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department oversees the maintenance of a competitive and sustainable private health insurance market, under the provisions of the Health Insurance Acts 1994 to 2012, and monitors developments on an ongoing basis, to ensure that the market is regulated appropriately in the transition to a market-based Universal Health Insurance system. There are a number of separate measures currently underway to ensure sustainability of the market, which include cost control initiatives, revised Risk Equalisation Credits to protect community-rated health insurance for all and the ongoing consideration of appropriate regulatory measures necessary to support the market.

With regard to health insurance costs, I have consistently emphasised the vital need to address the rising cost of private health insurance and the necessity for all private health insurers to address their cost base aggressively. Last year, I established the Consultative Forum on

Health Insurance to generate ideas to address health insurance costs. In June of this year, I appointed an independent Chairperson, Mr. Pat McLoughlin, who will work with my Department and the insurers on a review process to give effect to real cost reductions in the private health insurance market. I want all insurers to address the base cost of their claims and to see all procedures provided in an appropriate, safe, healthcare setting. Work on this review process is progressing well and I expect to receive an initial report from the Chair very shortly.

I am committed to progressively increasing the extent to which risk equalisation compensates for the costs of insuring older customers. A permanent Risk Equalisation Scheme (RES) was introduced with effect from 1 January, 2013. Prior to the introduction of the permanent RES, an Interim Scheme of Age-Related Tax Credits and Community Rating Levy had been in operation from 2009 to 2012. Yesterday I received Government approval to the immediate publication of the Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill 2013, which sets out revised risk equalisation credits and the corresponding stamp duties that will apply under the Risk Equalisation Scheme from 1 March 2014. Different risk equalisation credits will apply to 'advanced' and 'non-advanced' health insurance policies. There will be no change to the stamp duty payable on lower cost 'non-advanced' health insurance, which will help to ensure that the option of lower cost health insurance remains available. The stamp duty for health insurance products providing 'advanced' cover will increase from €350 to €399 per adult and from €120 to €135 per child. This will help direct support, in the form of higher risk equalisation credits, where it is needed most and will subsidise health insurance for the most vulnerable patients. Under the Health Insurance Acts, I set the rates for risk equalisation credits and the Minister for Finance sets the rate of stamp duty required to fund those credits.

The decreasing membership of the health insurance market, in addition to the adoption of industry-wide strategies, represents a significant challenge to the long term continuation of community rating and sustainability of the market. In particular, the proliferation of plans available on the market and the increasing segmentation of the market due to strategies adopted by the commercial providers is of growing concern to me. I am open to considering any practical measures or initiatives which help to maintain affordability, and provide greater clarity, for consumers seeking to purchase health insurance. I intend to address this further in the New Year in order to simplify things for the consumer and will consider the regulatory measures necessary to ensure a smooth transition from the current system of a voluntary private health insurance market to a Universal Health Insurance system.

Military Aircraft Landings

41. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the Canadian C130 Hercules aircraft which was present in Shannon on 6 November at gate 42 was carrying passengers or cargo. [48427/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Landings of Canadian military aircraft at Shannon are subject to the conditions that apply to all foreign military aircraft that land in Irish airports, i.e. 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. I am not in a position to provide information on the passengers and cargo of individual aircraft which have landed at Shannon Airport.

Disabled Drivers Grant Appeals

42. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Finance if an assessment as part of an appeal for a primary certificate to the disabled drivers medical board of appeal can be carried out in Limerick instead of Dublin on discretionary grounds in view of the applicants age and mobility restrictions which affect them when travelling long distances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48451/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised that the Medical Board of Appeal occasionally holds clinics in locations outside Dublin, but a minimum number of participants is required to make this feasible. I would point out that the Medical Board of Appeal is independent in its functions. The individual should contact the Medical Board of Appeal directly to enquire if a hearing could be facilitated in Limerick in the near future. The Board can be contacted at Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal, National Rehabilitation Hospital, Rochestown Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin or by phoning (01) 235 5279.

Strategic Investment Bank Establishment

43. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Finance if it will be possible for the Government to purchase the retail element of ACC bank to help establish a strategic investment bank as per the programme for Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48405/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): ACC's situation must be considered against a backdrop of a comprehensive programme of bank recapitalisation and restructuring that has been underway to change the future banking landscape in Ireland. It is hard to see in any context how the purchase of a bank which has been focussed on downsizing over the past number of years would match the goals and ambition of strategic investment. As the Deputy will be aware, the Government has decided to establish the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) which will absorb the National Pensions Reserve Fund (NPRF).

Using the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund, we will maximise our resources to enhance growth in the Irish economy and improve key infrastructure to maintain Ireland's attractiveness as a place to do business and to create employment. Officials of my Department are currently preparing the necessary legislation which I anticipate will be enacted early next year. Already, in the lifetime of this Government, the NPRF has established funds that support both strategic projects and a number that support SME financing. Further assessment of the need to create a Strategic Investment Bank over and above the contribution expected from the ISIF will be informed by the requirements of the economy once the Government's key immediate objectives for the repair of the banking system have been completed.

Tax Reliefs Eligibility

44. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide detail based on 2012 data of the exact number of policyholders who are now estimated to be affected as a result of his proposed amendments to section 8 of the Finance Bill on health insurance relief; if fewer than 577,000 policyholders will now be impacted by the new restrictions on health insurance tax relief; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48408/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Section 8 of the of the Finance (No. 2) Bill of 2013 provides for the Budget day announcement of the new ceilings of €1,000 per adult and €500 per child on the amount of medical insurance premiums that will qualify for tax relief. I will be bringing forward an amendment at Committee Stage to provide that where a student is

being charged a full adult premium that the adult ceiling for relief will apply. This amendment was sought by the health insurance industry. In addition, the current scheme of relief requires a defined relationship between the policyholder and the individual insured in order for the tax relief to apply for premiums paid on behalf of others. I have decided to remove this requirement through a Committee Stage amendment also.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that sufficient personal details for individuals covered by health insurance policies which would enable students in full-time education to be identified are not necessary for administering the granting of tax relief at source for medical insurance premiums, and are, therefore, not required to be included in the annual returns received from health insurers. Consequently there is no basis on which an estimate of the impact of applying the adult ceiling to students who are being charged a full adult premium could be compiled. Such information could not be obtained without requiring the health insurers to provide additional personal details in their annual returns, followed by carrying out a significant development of the Revenue Commissioners' computer systems.

Furthermore, it is not possible to anticipate the impact on claims for tax relief that might arise due to the removal of the existing defined relationship between the policyholder and the individual insured in order for the tax relief to apply. Notwithstanding the above, it is expected that the numbers affected would be reduced as a result of these Committee Stage Amendments.

Pensions Levy Issues

45. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 164 and 165 of 5 November 2013, the total unique number of chargeable persons that have been subjected to the levy in each year 2011, 2012 and 2013; if he will provide for each of those years the total amount of assets in euro of which the levy was taxed on the chargeable persons in 2011, 2012 and 2013; if the total asset base has increased or reduced during those three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48409/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Section 4 of the Finance (No. 2) Act 2011 provided for a levy on funded pension schemes and personal pension plans. The levy is charged at a rate of 0.6% on the aggregate of the market value of assets of a pension schemes at the valuation date. In the case of all pension scheme assets held in the form of contracts of assurance and all defined contribution occupational scheme assets, the valuation date is 30th June each year. In the case of defined benefit occupational pension schemes and small self administered schemes, for assets of such schemes held other than by way of contracts of assurance, if it is customary to prepare accounts to an appropriate standard to a different date, the valuation date is the last day of the accounting period of the scheme ending in the preceding 12 months. The number of chargeable persons making returns for the levy in each of the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 and the chargeable amounts are as follows:

Year	No. of Chargeable Persons	Chargeable Amounts
2011	357	€77.1bn
2012	307	€80.5bn
2013	306	€80.5bn

The chargeable amounts are based on the amount of the levy paid.

Exports Data

46. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 167 of 5 November 2013, the total number of persons employed in the pharmaceutical and chemical sector here for each year from 2008 to date in 2013; the total number of persons indirectly employed as a result of the pharmaceutical and chemical sector here for each year from 2008 to date in 2013; the total estimated contribution as a percentage of GDP and GNP for each year from 2008 to date in 2013 of the pharmaceutical and chemical sector here; the weight in output of the pharmaceutical and chemical sector here for each year from 2008 to date in 2013; the total quantity in euro of merchandise exports for each year from 2008 to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48410/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Regarding the employment numbers, annual average employment figures in NACE codes 20 (manufacture of chemicals and chemical products) and 21 (manufacture of basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations) are provided below. These data reflect Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) employment by NACE Rev. 2, two digit classification. However, I am informed by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) that caution should be taken with interpreting this disaggregated data due to their small sample size and therefore high margin of error. According to the data, the combined employment contribution of the NACE codes 20 and 21 in the second quarter of 2013 amounted to about 37,500 employees, or around 2.0 per cent of total economy-wide employment. My Department is not aware of any official data on the indirect employment resulting from the sector. CSO input-output analysis tables suggest that the multiplier effect from pharma-chem activity is low compared to other sectors. This is likely due to the high share of imports and intellectual property in pharma-chem output.

Average Employment ('000s)	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 H1
NACE codes 20 and 21	32.6	31.1	35.0	33.3	32.9	37.2

When looking at specific sectors, the most useful way of estimating the contribution to growth is to look at the value added of that sector using the output (rather than expenditure) approach to estimating economic activity. Gross value added (GVA) is conceptually similar to GDP, but examines production on a sectoral level, rather than through final expenditure. The CSO's National Income and Expenditure tables provide data on GVA in the pharma-chem sector (NACE codes 20 and 21) in both constant and current prices, although the data also include NACE code 19 (believed to be small relative to the other two). The table below therefore provides estimates of the GVA of NACE codes 20 and 21, their percentage of total output and their contribution to GVA growth between 2008 and 2012.

GVA (constant basic prices)	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
GVA – NACE codes 19, 20 and 21 (€ million)	10,239	12,633	15,981	17,412	17,868
GVA – NACE codes 19, 20 and 21 (% of total GVA)	7	9	11	12	12
Total GVA growth (% y-o-y)	-0.4	-4.1	-0.9	2.8	0.6
- NACE 19, 20 and 21 contribution (percentage points)	-0.8	1.7	2.6	0.9	0.3

Trade figures are reported on a monthly basis as part of the CSO's "Goods Exports and Imports" release, and are broken down (in value terms) according to standard international trade classification (SITC) categories. Exports of the sector can be loosely classified as SITC categories 51 (organic chemicals) and 54 (medical and pharmaceutical products), and these are outlined in the table.

Exports (€, million)	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (Jan-Aug)
SITC category codes 51 and 54	34,566	39,852	43,682	46,362	44,604	27,128

It should however be noted that, due to the high import intensity of output in the pharmaceutical sector, the net impact on GDP of any decline in exports is unlikely to be as large as the gross decline. Research conducted by officials from my Department (available at tinyurl.com/pharmapaper) suggests an input share of gross output of about 50 per cent in the sector. A decrease in exports in the sector is therefore likely to coincide with declining imports (on both the services side through licenses and royalties as well as raw chemical inputs), reducing the impact on net trade.

Job Creation Data

47. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance if he is able to track the number of jobs that can be attributed to measures introduced as a result of the jobs initiative and put a single estimated figure on the total number of jobs created to date as a result of these measures; if he can detail such a figure; the total number of persons employed, broken down between full time and part-time employment, for each year between 2007 and 2013 to date who are earning under €356 a week; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48412/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As part of the Programme for Government, the May 2011 *Jobs Initiative* introduced a number of measures designed to support the creation of employment. Since Q3 2011, net employment has increased by some 27,800. A number of measures were introduced under the Initiative including the introduction of the reduced VAT rate of 9% on tourism-related services. Measures to reduce the cost to employers of taking on new employees included a halving in the lower rate of Class A employer PRSI from 8.5% to 4¼% on jobs paying up to €356 per week (€18,523 annually) to apply between July 2011 and the end December 2013.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the estimated numbers of income earners whose main source of income is taxable under the PAYE system and whose annual gross income is less than €18,512, are set out as follows for tax years 2007 to 2013 inclusive.

Tax Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012e	2013e
Numbers (000s)	773	716	658	644	612	644	642

Source: Revenue Commissioners.

Estimated numbers are rounded to the nearest one thousand.

It should be noted that Gross Income referred to above is as defined in Revenue Statistical Reports. It should also be noted that a married couple who has elected or has been deemed to have elected for joint assessment is counted as one tax unit in these figures.

The numbers for tax years 2012 and 2013 are estimates from the Revenue tax-forecasting model using actual data for the year 2011 adjusted as necessary for income and employment trends in the interim. These figures are, therefore, provisional and likely to be revised.

The estimated numbers provided above include both full-time and part-time earners. Revenue income statistics are compiled on an annual basis and include incomes that were earned over a period of less than a year. It is not possible to distinguish the numbers in employment between those in full-time employment and those in part-time employment.

In relation to the reduced VAT rate, between Q3 2011 and Q2 2013 the numbers employed in the accommodation and food services sector have increased by 11,800 (10%) with a sizeable portion of this related to the reduced VAT rate. Work published by my Department found that in year-on-year terms, compared with a range of counterfactuals there was a net employment growth differential of 8-9% in this sector between Q2 2011 and Q2 2012 since the introduction of the reduced rate (MTFS, November 2012). A July 2013 Deloitte Report prepared for Bord Fáilte found the total increase in jobs following the VAT reduction could be estimated at c.10,000. The Initiative also provided additional public capital investment of some €109 million targeted specifically towards schools, local and regional roads and national energy retrofitting. Estimates suggest that between 8 and 12 jobs are created directly for every €1 million in additional capital expenditure, indicating these measures alone directly supported the creation of over 1,000 jobs. Jobs Initiative measures also served to support on-going improvements in labour cost competitiveness, a feature supportive of the labour market recovery we are now evidencing.

Tax Reliefs Application

48. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider including amendments (details supplied) on Committee Stage of the Finance Bill 2013 or by way of new amending legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48429/13]

56. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Finance if an amendment will be included in the Finance Bill to permit the category of physiotherapy, in the context of self-referrals without the need for a prior medical consultation, as an allowable health expense under the Revenue Med 1 scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48572/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 48 and 56 together.

I have considered this matter carefully and I have decided at this time, not to extend the parameters of the scheme to include self-referral for physiotherapy.

General practitioners act as an access and control point for the scheme of tax relief on health expenses, as all such expenses must be incurred on the advice or referral of a general practitioner. If physiotherapy was allowed without the need for the treatment to be prescribed by a practitioner, it would inevitably lead to calls for other treatments to similarly qualify for relief, which could greatly increase the overall cost of the scheme. Given the difficult fiscal environment, I am not predisposed to such a potential cost increase.

Property Taxation Administration

49. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the concerns being raised by persons who are trying to get through to the Revenue Commissioner's property tax helpline but who cannot get through or who are having to wait a very long time to get to speak to someone; if he will provide extra staff to ensure that persons are able to speak to someone in a timely manner when they ring the helpline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48478/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Revenue that the introduction of Local Property Tax (LPT), which is the largest ever extension of the self-assessment system, represents a very great administrative challenge. For example, Revenue has answered

in excess of 580,000 telephone calls and replied to in excess of 200,000 letters or emails since March 2013. Revenue has further advised me that because LPT is a new tax it is difficult to anticipate service volumes and as a consequence the number of agents required. Revenue has acknowledged that exceptional delays in accessing the Helpline, which is the primary contact point for LPT queries, were experienced by some callers in the days immediately following the issue of the 2014 notifications. Access was also hampered on an intermittent basis on those days by technical issues in the service provider's telephony system which, have since been resolved.

In response to the demand for service, Revenue ensured that extra resources were deployed to the helpline within two days of the peak period occurring and also deployed extra resources to its own internal support service to cater for the more complex queries. It has put contingency plans in place to further rapidly increase the number of agents on the helpline should it be necessary to do so. In total there are now 200 agents fully deployed to LPT telephone call handling. In addition to the extra staff deployment, callers can now leave their telephone contact details on the system in preference to waiting for service and will receive an out of hours call back from the LPT team. Revenue has extended the helpline opening hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. since 6 November and will maintain these hours for the peak filing periods.

Revenue has also extended the paper filing date by one week to 14th November to allow people further consider their 2014 payment method before committing their preferred option to Revenue. The combined initiatives of additional deployments, extended opening hours and the extended 'paper' deadline have already significantly reduced the waiting times on the Helpline.

I again commend Revenue for the excellent work it has done in taking LPT from concept to a fully functioning tax in such a short period of time, including the drafting of legislation, the building of a brand new property register, the provision of customer service to such a large volume of taxpayers and crucially the contribution of €215m to date to the Exchequer.

Property Taxation Assessments

50. **Deputy Barry Coven** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a county breakdown of the 2014 property tax charges falling due on local authority housing. [48489/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that, in accordance with section 851A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, all taxpayer information held by the Commissioners is confidential and they are therefore precluded from providing a detailed breakdown of the amount of Local Property Tax (LPT) due on residential properties owned by individual local authorities for 2014. However, the following may be helpful to the Deputy.

I am informed that local authorities are liable to pay LPT on their properties in the same way as any other residential property owner, unless the properties are used to accommodate people with special housing needs - the legislation provides for a specific exemption in these cases. I am further informed that, based on estimates provided by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, the Revenue Commissioners expect that residential properties owned by local authorities and other social housing providers will amount to approximately 160,000 properties. They will, however, be unable to confirm final figures until details of all the properties are provided by local authorities and social housing bodies and the data are fully analysed.

I am further advised that, for local authority owned properties that are not exempt from LPT, the market value of each of these properties will be deemed to fall into the first valuation band,

that is €100,000 or less, which represents an LPT charge of €45 per property for 2013 and €90 per property for 2014.

In accordance with the legislative amendment which I introduced to the House earlier this year, LPT due from local authorities and other social housing providers in respect of 2013 is payable on or before 1 January 2014, as is the LPT due for 2014, and they can avail of the full range of payment options provided by the Revenue Commissioners. Resulting from these arrangements, local authorities may decide to pay 2013 and 2014 LPT liabilities together in 2014.

Banking Sector Issues

51. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will confirm that the bank levy announced in budget 2014 is being used to fund the resolution fund pursuant to section 15 of the Central Bank and Credit Institutions (Resolution) Act 2011; his views on whether the enactment of COD 2013/0253 on the single resolution mechanism and single bank resolution fund will result in an increased revenue contribution from the domestic banks here; when he expects this additional revenue will be raised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48539/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The proceeds from the levy on financial institutions announced in Budget 2014 will be paid into the Exchequer. It will not be used to fund the Resolution Fund pursuant to Section 15 of the Central Bank and Credit Institutions (Resolution) Act 2011. Section 10 of the Central Bank and Credit Institutions (Resolution) Act 2011 established a resolution fund in Ireland. The purpose of this fund is to provide a source of funding for the resolution of financial instability in, or an imminent serious threat to the financial stability of, an authorised credit institution. Authorised credit institutions are required to make contributions to the fund in the form of a resolution fund levy. The domestic banks in Ireland are currently subject to the Credit Institutions Stabilisation Act (“CISA”) 2010 and are therefore outside the scope of the levy until December 2014. Upon expiry of the CISA the domestic banks will be required to pay into the resolution fund.

In July of this year the Commission published its proposal for a Single Resolution Mechanism (SRM) as the next essential step to the banking union. The SRM proposal includes provision for a single resolution fund for Member States participating in the banking union. It is anticipated that when the SRM comes into force the domestic banks in Ireland will contribute to this fund in place of our national resolution fund. Therefore, the domestic banks will be making a contribution as a result of the SRM. This contribution will be held in the single resolution fund to be set up at EU level under the SRM.

The purpose of the single resolution fund is to provide a source of funding for the resolution of banks in the EU banking union. One of the objectives of the SRM is to avoid that funds needed for such purposes come from national budgets. This in turn assists in minimising taxpayers’ exposure to the costs of bank rescues.

The fund is to be built up over a ten year period from the date of entry into force of the SRM. While negotiations are on-going, I expect the SRM to enter into force sometime in 2015.

Banking Sector Issues

52. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will detail in the context of COD 2013/0253 on the single resolution mechanism and single bank resolution fund

if he favours allowing the European Commission having the final responsibility to validate resolution plans of the bank that have been accepted by the resolution board; if he will outline whether as currently envisaged in the context of COD 2013/0253 if the ECB decides, as the single supervisor, that a bank should be shut down, the proposed single resolution fund board could overrule this decision as currently envisaged; if he will outline in the context of the level of liquidity that the ECB provides banks when they cannot access private markets the extent to which the single resolution board will be able to prevent an ECB Governing Council decision to remove liquidity from the banking system, as was threatened in Ireland and Cyprus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48540/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In May 2012 the Commission called for a banking union to restore confidence in banks and in the euro. This was reflected in the report on Economic and Monetary Union prepared by the Presidents of the European Council, the Commission, the Eurogroup and the European Central Bank. The SSM which is the first part of this process was formally adopted by ECOFIN in October and has entered into force. The next important step is the establishment of the SRM. Such a mechanism is considered necessary on the basis of the principle underpinning the banking union that where supervision is centralised it should be complemented with a centralised resolution authority.

The SRM proposal consists of the Single Resolution Board and a Single Resolution Fund, financed by contributions from the financial sector. As the Deputy notes the ultimate decision maker in this process is the Commission, as only an EU institution can carry out such a function and not an agency. While the SRM proposal is under consideration at the Council, the view of the Commission and most Member States is that we should proceed on the basis of the current proposal.

On the second issue raised by the Deputy regarding resolution of a bank, Article 16 of the draft proposal sets out the procedures to be followed.

The first step involves the ECB or a national resolution authority making an assessment whether:

- (i) an entity is failing or likely to fail;
- (ii) having regard to timing and other relevant circumstances, there is no other reasonable prospect that any alternative private sector or supervisory action would prevent its failure within a reasonable timeframe;
- (iii) a resolution action is necessary in the public interest.

If the Single Resolution Board is of the view that all of these conditions have been met, it is required to make a recommendation to the Commission that the bank be placed into resolution. If the Commission agrees with the Board, then it will decide accordingly. If it is however of the view that the conditions are not met, there is a due process that must be followed, but ultimately it can decide not to place the entity in resolution and in such circumstances national insolvency law will apply.

In relation to the Deputy's final point, there are a number of measures in the proposal which require the ECB to work in conjunction with the Single Resolution Board to ensure consistency so that the system works effectively. Both share the objective of ensuring financial stability and growth in the Euro area. This is considered a crucial step to overcome the current financial fragmentation and uncertainty, to ease funding conditions for sovereigns and banks and to break the link between the two. This is in the best interests of Member States and the banking system as a whole.

Furthermore, Article 12 of the SRM proposal sets out the resolution objectives, which include the need to avoid significant adverse effects on financial stability “*in the EU and Member States concerned*”. This means that account has to be taken of national interests in any resolution decision.

While this represents the current position of the proposal, the matter will be discussed by Ministers at the forthcoming Ecofin this week.

Property Taxation Administration

53. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48566/13]

57. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 161 of 7 November 2013, his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48574/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 53 and 57 together because they relate to the same queries.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the following is the position on the issues raised.

The Local Property Tax (LPT) was introduced as a half year charge for 2013, with 2014 being the first full year of the tax. The due dates for paying LPT are set out in legislation. The due date for paying the 2013 LPT was on or before 1 July 2013. The due date for payment of the liability for 2014 and future years is on or before 1 January.

The full year charge for LPT is 0.18% of the mid-point of the valuation band for each property, where the property is value is under €1 million. (For properties valued over €1 million, the rate is 0.18% on the first €1 million and 0.25% on the excess, with no banding applied.) In the case raised by the Deputy the full year charge for both properties is a total of €810, the charge on the first property being €585 and on the second being €225. The half-year charges were each rounded down to €292 and €112 respectively. The letter advised the person concerned that a detailed breakdown of the liability per property was available online through www.revenue.ie using the Property ID and PIN provided on the letter.

LPT is chargeable on residential properties in the State. In most cases the owner of the property is liable. In the context of a rented property, the landlord is liable where the property is let for a period of less than twenty years.

The LPT legislation provides a return date of 7 November for liable persons to advise Revenue of their payment option. The Deputy may be aware that Revenue has extended the paper filing deadline by one week to 14 November. The online filing date has been extended by Revenue to 27 November. These deadlines are to ensure there is sufficient time to set up direct debits or other phased payment arrangements in time to start in 1 January.

The person in question was issued with a letter that set out his liability for 2014 and requested him to confirm to Revenue his chosen payment method for 2014. This does not mean that he is required to pay his 2014 LPT liability before 1 January 2014 unless he chooses to do so. The only requirement is for him to confirm his payment method online by 27 November. As the person in question is a multiple property owner he is obliged to pay and file online, therefore

his payment options are:

- Spread payments evenly throughout 2014 by way of direct debit (direct debits commence on 15 January 2014);

- Spread payments evenly throughout 2014 by way of deduction from salary, pension or Government payment;

- Pay in full now by debit/credit card;

- Pay in full by single debit authority (like a cheque), which will mean the bank account will be debited by Revenue on 21 March 2014.

Should the person wish to continue paying his LPT liability using Single Debit Authority, he should access his online account via www.revenue.ie using his Property ID and PIN numbers and complete the mandate as instructed. I can confirm that if he uses the Single Debit Authority option his account will not be deducted until 21 March 2014, unless he specifies an earlier payment date.

Questions about how revenues from the LPT are used should be directed to my colleague, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government.

Tax Credits

54. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Finance if consideration will be given to retaining a shared but reduced one parent family tax credit to mitigate against hardship which may arise for responsible non-cohabiting parents, particularly fathers and which would be more in keeping with the desire of Government to afford recognition to all family types. [48570/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware, the One-Parent Family Tax Credit (OPFTC) is being replaced with a new Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit from 1 January 2014. The Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit will be of the same value, i.e. €1,650, as the existing OPFTC and will also carry the same entitlement to the extended standard rate tax band of €36,800 per annum. The new credit will be targeted such that it is available only to the primary carer of the child. A maximum of one credit will be available per single carer/claimant, regardless of whether he or she cares for more than one child. This is the same condition that applies to the current OPFTC. Given the difficult fiscal environment it is essential to review all tax reliefs, credits and incentives in order to ensure that they are properly targeted and if necessary re-focused in order that they can achieve the socio-economic objectives that are set for them. A system that allows multiple claims in respect of the same child, as can happen with the OPFTC, is unsustainable.

The Commission on Taxation acknowledged that the One-Parent Family Tax Credit plays a role in supporting and incentivising the labour market participation of single and widowed parents. However, in its recommendations it concluded that the credit should be retained but that it should be allocated to the principal carer only. The restructuring of the credit will achieve such an outcome.

Allocation of child care responsibilities is primarily for parents to agree. However, having listened carefully to the views expressed by colleagues and Deputies, I have asked my officials to explore how the credit could be used by another individual, where the primary carer chooses not to, or cannot, claim it and accordingly I will be bringing forward an amendment at Committee Stage. However, I have no plans to retain a shared but reduced One-Parent Family Tax

Credit.

Tax Reliefs Application

55. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Finance if, notwithstanding the provisions of sections 472D and 766 of the Taxes Consolidation Act of 1997 and sections 13 and 21 of the Finance No. 2 Bill 2013, consideration will be given to the introduction of a more direct tax relief incentive by which the first portion of a reward paid to employees of companies based in Ireland for registering a patent for an innovation would be tax-free, as such a measure would reward creativity in the business sector and harness the job creation potential of innovations for this country. [48571/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy has noted, the main tax incentive for innovation in Ireland is the R&D Tax Credit which gives a company a tax credit of 25% for expenditure on qualifying R&D. As was highlighted in the Report of the Review of the R&D Tax Credit 2013, which is available on the tax policy website at http://taxpolicy.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/131015-FINAL-VERSION-FOR-WEB-Review-of-RD-Tax-Credit-2013_web.pdf, this is a very competitive regime by international standards and has been very successful at incentivising investment in R&D in Ireland and supporting employment in Ireland. The proposal from the Deputy seems similar to the Patent Income Relief scheme which was previously available in Ireland, and which was abolished in 2010. The decision to abolish this relief was made following consideration of a recommendation to this effect in the Report of the Commission on Taxation (2009). The Commission on Taxation was of the view that the exemption for patent income was not an effective measure in incentivising enterprises to engage in research and development activities in Ireland and that it had been used instead as a tax-efficient means of remunerating employees and directors.

The R&D Tax Credit regime provides a more direct and effective incentive for enterprises to innovate and invest in R&D activities. The scheme has been enhanced considerably in recent years to make it one of the most competitive of its kind anywhere in the world, and has been most successful in this regard, as was confirmed by the 2013 Review.

Further, the “key employee” element of the R&D Tax Credit was introduced in 2012 to allow the benefit of this tax credit to be transferred to an individual employee in certain circumstances, and may reward employees for innovation in the way suggested by the Deputy. This element of the regime is only in its early stages but is gathering momentum and is viewed very positively by innovative firms: according to our independent survey of R&D active firms, which was conducted as part of the 2013 Review, over 70% of firms surveyed are positively disposed to the key employee provision.

Finally, I would like to address the broader issue and to assure the Deputy that my Department is always looking at ways that the tax code may be used to incentivise innovation in Ireland. As was noted in the recent 2013 R&D Report, the responsibility for developing a policy environment that fosters innovation cuts across a number of Departments, including the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform as well as my own Department. As tax is only one method of incentivising innovation, this report has recommended that the relevant Departments work closely together to make sure that the policy outcomes of each different government support are aligned.

Question No. 56 answered with Question No. 48.

Question No. 57 answered with Question No. 53.

Courses Accreditation

58. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding ongoing negotiations between Quality and Qualifications Ireland and a college (details supplied) in Dublin 14 regarding the accreditation of its courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48513/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware, QQI was established in November 2012 through the amalgamation of the NQAI, HETAC and FETAC. Since its establishment QQI has been undertaking a comprehensive policy development programme, involving the publication of a number of policy papers and broad consultation with stakeholders. I am informed that representatives of the college concerned attended the consultation events organised by QQI. I also understand that the awarding body of the programmes offered by the college submitted comments to QQI. The process for access to initial validation of programmes leading to QQI awards opened in early October. The college referred to in the Deputy's question has not contacted QQI in that regard.

Departmental Expenditure

59. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the recently announced €28 million for minor works grant scheme is additional capital expenditure for 2013; if so, what the level of capital expenditure in 2013 will now be in the wake of this; the impact of this on his Department's overall budget in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48415/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The overall capital allocation that my Department has for 2013 amounts to €432.750m. The Minor Works Grant which will issue to primary schools in the coming weeks and amounting to over €28m is part of my Department's allocation for 2013. It is expected that the full 2013 capital allocation will be expended by year-end.

Departmental Expenditure

60. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the €40 million for the summer works scheme is additional to the €540 million allocated for his Department's capital spending in the expenditure report for 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48416/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The expenditure arising on Summer Works Scheme 2014 will be drawn from within the €540m capital allocation that my Department has secured for 2014.

Teacher Redeployment

61. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to make changes to the qualifying criteria for the 2014 supplementary teaching panel; when his Department will be accepting applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48432/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The core function of the re-

deployment arrangements is to facilitate the redeployment of all surplus permanent teachers to other schools that have vacancies. The redeployment of all surplus permanent teachers is key to the Department's ability to manage within its payroll budget and ceiling on teacher numbers. Thereafter, schools are required under the panel arrangements to fill permanent vacancies from supplementary panels comprised of eligible fixed-term (temporary/substitute) and part-time teachers.

The arrangements for panel access for fixed term (temporary/substitute) and part-time teachers for the 2014/15 school year are set out in Department Circular 0057/2013 which is available on the Department website. The supplementary panel set up in accordance with the arrangements set out in this circular will be used for appointments to full-time permanent posts in primary schools but only where those posts are not otherwise required to facilitate the redeployment of surplus permanent and CID holding teachers. The closing date for application for access to the supplementary panel under the terms of the circular is Friday, 13 December, 2013.

School Management

62. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools not in compliance with Departmental circulars regarding school opening hours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48438/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the provisions of the Education Act, 1998, the Board of Management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school. In managing a school, the Boards is required to comply with the relevant provisions of the Education Act 1998 and the terms of Circulars issued by my Department.

The provisions in relation to minimum school hours are set out in my Department's "Time in School" Circulars; 11/95 (for primary schools) and M29/95 (for post primary schools).

At primary level a full day comprises a period of not less than five hours and forty minutes. At post-primary level the relevant circular provides that the minimum number of instruction hours per week is 28.

There is no requirement on individual schools to report their opening hours to my Department.

Special Educational Needs Staffing

63. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address the anomaly where special needs assistants are paid for contracted hours during official school time but whose working day may start approximately 15 minutes before or after this official school time begins and ends. [48439/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The position regarding the working hours of full-time SNAs is as outlined in the standard SNA contract of employment, which was agreed by this Department, the Trade Unions (IMPACT and SIPTU) representing SNAs and the Management Bodies in 2005. In that context, the standard SNA contract has been designed to be flexible to cater for the different spectrum of working hours across all the various schools including primary, post-primary and special schools. No set hours were agreed but instead full-time SNAs are expected to work for the normal school hours in the school that they are working in, and in addition to be available for a period of time before and after school in

order to help with reception and dispersal of children and preparation and tidying up of classrooms etc. These times are set locally by the school management and will vary from school to school depending on the requirements of the school.

In addition, all SNAs were required to be available for a number of days at the start and finish of each school term not exceeding 12 in total. Under the Croke Park Agreement it was agreed to introduce greater flexibility to the use of these 12 days. These 12 days now equate to 72 hours (pro-rata for part-time SNAs) to be used by schools as an additional bank of hours to be utilised and delivered outside of normal school opening hours and/or the normal school year.

SNAs who are employed in a part-time capacity are paid a pro-rata amount dependent upon their level of hours of employment. Part-time SNAs are paid on the agreed divisor rate for pay purposes for part-time SNAs which is 32 hours.

Furthermore, the issue of appropriate working hours for all public servants was one of the key aspects of the set of proposals for a public service agreement which were put forward by the Labour Relations Commission and which now form the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2016 (the Haddington Road Agreement). The specific text of the Haddington Road Agreement relating to working hours for SNAs is as follows:

”SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS

Hours

Under the terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014, discussions took place that led to agreement on changed attendance arrangements for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) that give schools the option of an additional two hours working time per week from each Special Needs Assistant. Under the terms of this Agreement on increased working hours in the Public Service, the available requirements in schools for additional hours for SNAs is quite limited. Given issues such as the duration of the school day and operation hours, and the specific availability of individual SNAs the details of the utilisation of any additional requirements should be the subject of further discussions.

These new attendance arrangements, allied to the provisions outlined in the above paragraph should be the subject of a review by the LRC in advance of the 2013/2014 school year, involving the Department of Education and Skills and IMPACT/SIPTU, in order to assess if the additional hours are being utilised in the most effective and appropriate manner and in order to achieve agreement on any changes deemed necessary in terms of the arrangement agreed for teachers. This will constitute the liability on Special Needs Assistants in respect of working hours for the purposes of this extension to the Public Service Agreement.”

Student Grant Scheme Applications

64. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will expedite a student grant application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48440/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support that in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy his application is currently awaiting review following receipt of requested documentation. SUSI will advise him directly of the outcome of the review.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

65. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the primary and secondary schools located in Dublin 2, 4, 6, 6W and 8 that have applied for funding under the summer works scheme for each year since 2009 to date in 2013; the schools located in Dublin 2, 4, 6, 6W and 8 that were unsuccessful in their applications for each year since 2009 to date in 2013; the funding that was provided for each of the successful applicants and the funding that was sought by the unsuccessful applicants located in Dublin 2, 4, 6, 6W and 8 for each year since 2009 to date in 2013; the five most common reasons that funding was not granted to specific applicants in each year since 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48441/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information sought is being compiled at present and will be forwarded to the Deputy shortly.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

66. **Deputy Tom Barry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide funding as a matter of urgency for the construction of showers at a school (details supplied) in County Cork. [48453/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I refer the Deputy to my announcement last Thursday, 7 November, to the re-introduction of the Summer Works Scheme for 2014. Funding from the Scheme will allow eligible schools to carry out small and medium scale building works that will improve and upgrade existing school buildings. It is open therefore to the school, referred to by the Deputy, to make an application if it so wishes under the scheme for the works referred to.

School Funding

67. **Deputy Tom Barry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason in the north Cork towns of Mallow and Fermoy funding is biased towards one particular school in each town to the detriment of the other second level schools. [48454/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I assume the Deputy is referring to the funding of schools within the second-level system. The funding arrangements made by my Department for post primary schools reflect the sectoral division of our second-level system. At the core of all arrangements is reliance upon capitation as the principal determinant of funding.

My Department provides funding to Community and Comprehensive schools on a budget basis that is based mainly on pupil numbers, but also take into account additional factors which vary from school to school such as age of buildings, size of school etc. With regard to the Education and Training Board (ETB) sector, formerly known as the VEC sector, financial allocations are made to ETBs as part of a block grant. ETBs are given a high level of autonomy in the management and appropriation of this grant and each is allowed to distribute its allocations in line with its priorities and perceptions of need.

My Department provides funding to voluntary secondary schools by way of per capita grants. The Deputy may wish to note that Circular 48/2009 clarifies issues relating to the allocation of funding to voluntary secondary schools. The circular states that capitation funding

provided for general running costs and funding provided for caretaking and secretarial services may be regarded as a common grant which the Board of Management can allocate according to its own priorities. I have no plans to amend the present funding arrangements at second level.

Disadvantaged Status

68. **Deputy Tom Barry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria that must be met to acquire DEIS status; the ongoing review system for same; and if there are procedures to remove schools from the scheme. [48455/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The underlying criteria for participation in DEIS is a school's relative level of disadvantage against all other schools therefore those schools with the highest concentration of disadvantage were selected for participation in the DEIS programme. The identification process for DEIS was in line with international best practice and had regard to, and employed, the existing and most appropriate data sources available. It was managed by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) on behalf of the Department and supported by quality assurance work co-ordinated through the Department's Regional Offices and the Inspectorate. The choice of variables included in the assessment of disadvantage was guided by the definition of disadvantage in the Education Act, (1998) which refers both to learning outcomes and to social and economic factors.

In the primary sector the identification of primary schools, for participation in DEIS, was based on analysis of a survey, carried out by the ERC, of all primary schools. In the case of second-level schools, analysis of centrally-held data from the Post-Primary Pupils Database and the State Examinations Commission databases determined the identification of post-primary schools for participation in DEIS. There are no measures, within the programme, to remove schools from DEIS.

A key priority for my Department is to prioritise and target resources in schools with the most concentrated levels of educational disadvantage. To this end resources in DEIS schools have been protected, with no overall changes to DEIS-related staffing levels or DEIS funding in 2013. That challenge is significant, given the current economic climate and the target to reduce public expenditure. This limits the capacity for any additionally to the DEIS programme.

Disadvantaged Status

69. **Deputy Tom Barry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether it would be fairer to assess individual students rather than entire school catchment areas when determining disadvantage. [48456/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The majority of schools include among their pupils children with disadvantaged backgrounds, and in general schools address the individual needs of these children without recourse to additional targeted resources. Research carried out by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) for the Educational Disadvantage Committee found strong evidence for the proposition that the disadvantage associated with poverty and social exclusion assumes a multiplier effect when large numbers of pupils in a school are from a similar disadvantaged background (the "social context effect").

It is this principle that underpins the approach taken under DEIS "Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools" the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion which focuses on addressing the educational needs of children and young people from the most disadvantaged communities.

Schools were identified for inclusion in DEIS by virtue of their identified level of disadvantage which was based on the concentration of disadvantaged pupils enrolled in individual schools. In the current economic climate the focus of my Department is to retain where possible key resources in those schools targeted under the DEIS programme supporting children most at risk of educational disadvantage.

Teachers' Remuneration

70. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) in County Kerry who has applied for a pension is not being recognised as a secondary teacher in view of the fact that they taught home economics for over 20 years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48465/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Pension entitlements for teachers are determined in accordance with the relevant pension scheme. Professional registration of teachers is a separate matter. The Teaching Council is the body with statutory responsibility for the registration of teachers including the recognition of teaching qualifications. Any teacher who wishes to make enquiries regarding his/her registration status should enquire directly with the Council. The Deputy will appreciate that it would not be appropriate for me to intervene in individual cases.

Teacher Training Provision

71. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills in view of the fact the higher diploma in education is to be replaced by a two year masters degree in education from 2014 if his attention has been drawn to the fact the back to education allowance is not available for a masters degree in education, as it was for the higher diploma in education, and maintenance grants are not available for the course; the reason these changes were made; if such changes are a disincentive to enter the teaching profession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48466/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Recommendations for changes to initial teacher education were included in the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020 and have been incorporated into the Teaching Council's Policy Paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education and Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers. Both were published in 2011. The improvements to be made to post graduate courses for post-primary teaching include the reconfiguration of the content and the subsequent increasing of the duration of courses to two years.

The lengthened and reconfigured programmes will include substantial periods of school placement as central to student teacher development and a number of mandatory elements such as literacy and numeracy, adolescent learning, teaching, learning and assessment including school and classroom planning, differentiation, behaviour management, inclusive education (special education, multiculturalism, disadvantage, etc) and ICT in teaching and learning. The reconfigured extended post primary consecutive programmes are due to commence in September 2014.

The designation of the reconfigured and extended programmes, e.g. as Masters or post-graduate programmes, is a matter for the higher education institutions involved.

With effect from the 2012/13 academic year maintenance support is not available for stu-

dents entering postgraduate courses. Those who meet the qualifying conditions for the special rate of grant under the Student Grant Scheme are eligible to have their post-graduate tuition fees paid up to the maximum fee limit of €6,270.

A postgraduate student may qualify to have a €2,000 contribution made towards the costs of their fees. The income threshold for this payment is €31,500 for the 2013/14 academic year, increasing relative to the number of family dependents.

The Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) is a matter for the Minister for Social Protection.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

72. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consideration will be given to extending mature student status to persons who may have begun third level education before the age of 23, when their parents' means were taken into consideration for assessment, but have since continued further study and have been living independently for several years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48491/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): For student grants purposes, a student may be assessed as an independent student if he/she has attained the age of 23 on 1st January of the year of first entry to an approved post leaving certificate course or an approved higher education course or of re-entry to an approved course following a break in studies of at least three years, and is not ordinarily resident with his/her parents from the previous 1 October. Otherwise he/she would continue to be assessed on the basis of his/her parents' income.

I have no plans at present to change the current arrangements.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

73. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) in County Kerry is deemed ineligible for a third level grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48492/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The decision on eligibility for a student grant is a matter for the relevant grant awarding authority.

The Deputy will appreciate that in the absence of all of the relevant details that would be contained in an individual's application form it would not be possible for me to say whether or not a student would qualify for a grant.

Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support that a letter issued to the student referred to by the Deputy on 21st October 2013 advising that her original application as an independent mature student had been cancelled and that she should reapply as a dependent student. Her new application will be processed when received.

Where an individual applicant considers that she has been unjustly refused a student grant, or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI.

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

Board. The relevant appeal form is available to download from http://www.studentfinance.ie/downloads/1375344221/2013_SGAB_appeal_form.pdf.

State Examinations Issues

74. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow who has been refused a reader for next year's State examinations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48514/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations including organising the holding of examinations, determining procedures in places where examinations are conducted including the supervision of examinations and making arrangements for the marking of work presented for examination.

In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

Office of Public Works Staff

75. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if there are any plans for recruitment in the Office of Public Works in the next 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48431/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): All recruitment undertaken by the Office of Public Works is governed by the necessity to remain within the staffing limits directed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform through the Employment Control Framework (ECF), together with level of funding made available to meet payroll costs. Recruitment of additional permanent staff is subject to the sanction provided via that Department.

In relation to Established staff, the Office of Public Works (OPW), through the Public Appointments Service, is currently in the process of filling the posts of Engineer Grade II (Fire & Security) and Director of the Botanic Gardens.

In relation to our State Industrial staff, there are no plans to recruit permanent staff in the near future. However, as occurs annually, it is intended to recruit the 2014 seasonal complement of staff in due course, principally to meet the demands of arterial drainage maintenance work and to augment guide staff at our heritage sites and/or visitor centres. The recruitment of seasonal guide staff for 2014 was recently advertised to the public.

In addition, the OPW, in conjunction with the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (R.I.A.I.) and Engineers Ireland sponsors work placement training programmes for Graduate Architects and Graduate Engineers respectively.

The training programme for the Graduate Architects provides practical experience for those wishing to prepare for the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (R.I.A.I.) (NUI) examination in professional practice or RIBA Part 3 examinations. Since 2004, 95 Graduates have been placed on the programme including 24 who are placed currently – with limited scope for additional placements in 2014.

The training programme for the Graduate Engineers assists them in attaining the skills and learning required to become Chartered Engineers. The programme involves taking in 10 graduates per year over a rolling 3-year cycle, up to a maximum of 30 graduates. A competition to place a further 10 Graduates is nearing completion and the successful candidates will be placed in January, 2014 which will bring the total placed to 30.

While not in a position to offer further employment opportunities, the Office is committed to partaking in the FÁS Work Placement/JobBridge programme and has facilitated almost 60 placements since 2011.

Commercial Rates Calculations

76. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the procedures in place for determining the rateable valuation of new buildings, the timeframe the valuation process takes; if it is possible for the relevant local authority to levy commercial rates on a property that has not been assessed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48536/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Valuation Act, 2001 provides for the valuation of all commercial and industrial property and in this regard the Commissioner of Valuation is independent in the performance of his functions under the Act. The making of valuations for rating is the Commissioner's sole prerogative and I, as Minister, have no function in decisions in this regard.

The procedures for making an application for a determination of valuation are prescribed in section 27 of the Valuation Act, 2001, wherein it is provided that any one of the following - an occupier of a property, a rating authority, a person as respects a property to which he/she is an interest holder or an occupier of a property that appears on a valuation list - may apply in writing to the Commissioner of Valuation for a revision of an existing valuation or for a new valuation to be determined in respect of a new building. The statutory fee prescribed for the service is €250 which should accompany the application to the Valuation Office.

Under section 28(4) of the Act, a Revision Officer appointed by the Commissioner may carry out a revision of valuation in relation to a particular property only if a material change of circumstances (MCC) has occurred since the property was last revised. MCC is defined in section 3 of the Act as a change of circumstances, which consist of a new building, a change in value due to structural alterations of an existing building, total or partial demolition of a building or a sub-division or amalgamation of relevant property.

Should the foregoing MCC criteria be satisfied, the appointed Revision Officer will consider the application and determine and issue a valuation for the subject property within a period of six months from the date of his appointment. The notice of the decision by way of a Proposed Valuation Certificate will issue to the applicant, who, if dissatisfied with the decision, will have the right to make representations in respect of the proposed valuation and will have 28 days to do so, from the date of issue of the certificate. The Revision Officer is required to consider the representations prior to finalising the valuation and issuing a Final Valuation Certificate and amending the Valuation List.

If dissatisfied with the outcome of the representations, the occupier will have a further statutory right to make an appeal to the Commissioner of Valuation in the first instance and thereafter to the Valuation Tribunal. The Valuation Tribunal is an independent body set up to settle disputed valuations between the Commissioner of Valuation and individual ratepayers. In relation

to the appeal process, I might mention that legislative proposals are currently before the Houses of the Oireachtas which would result in the first appeal to the Commissioner being removed, in which case, the appeal would be to the Valuation Tribunal only. This is one of a number of legislative proposals set out in the Valuation (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill which is currently awaiting a Committee stage reading in Seanad Éireann. However, it will be a matter for the Oireachtas to determine how such proposals proceed or otherwise.

Regarding the levying of rates, the position is that under Irish law, there is a distinct separation of function between the determination of valuation of rateable property and the setting and collection of commercial rates. The amount of rates payable by a ratepayer in any calendar year is a product of the valuation of that property determined by the Valuation Office and the annual rate on valuation (ARV) set annually by the elected members of the rating authority. Rates can only be collected by the rating authority on property which has been valued under the Valuation Act, 2001 and there is no mechanism to otherwise collect rates pending the determination and issue of the valuation under the Act.

Capital Programme Expenditure

77. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a breakdown of the annual infrastructure and capital expenditure by the State on a regional basis and a county basis over the past five years. [48450/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): My Department is responsible for setting the overall capital allocations across Departments and for monitoring monthly capital expenditure at Departmental level. Information in relation to expenditure at project level is a matter for individual Ministers and their Departments. My Department does not maintain information in relation to the regional or county breakdown of capital expenditure by Departments and their Agencies.

Details in relation to the overall annual Exchequer capital budget for the past five years along with a breakdown by Department can be found on the databank website hosted by my Department, <http://databank.per.gov.ie/>. The databank contains a comprehensive set of data on public expenditure in Ireland.

Flood Prevention Measures

78. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the Office of Public Works will consider funding for flood alleviation measures in an area (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48575/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The management of localised flooding issues in any particular area is a matter in the first instance for the relevant local authority concerned.

It is open to Kildare County Council to submit an application under the Office of Public Work's Minor Works & Coastal Protection Scheme. Any application received will be assessed under the eligibility criteria, which includes a requirement that any measures are cost beneficial and have regard to the overall availability of funding. Application forms and related guidelines are available on the OPW website under Flood Risk Management.

Job Initiatives

79. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 391 of 5 November, the reason it is not possible to track the exact number of positions which have been filled as a result of the combined efforts of the measures introduced under the jobs initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48411/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): One of the key roles of Government is to create a stable and supportive operating environment for businesses, where enterprises can start-up, grow and create jobs.

Since coming into office, the Government has taken a number of initiatives to support the business environment. These include recapitalising the pillar banks to enable them to commence lending again, re-establishing control of public expenditure, rebuilding Ireland's reputation abroad, introducing the 2011 Jobs Initiative and delivering commitments under the 2012 and 2013 Action Plans for Jobs. All of these measures are combining in different ways to support companies, attract investment and support jobs growth. It is not feasible to disaggregate the impact of one initiative over another in what is a complementary suite of activity on the part of the Government to rebuild the economy.

However, the latest employment figures published by the CSO show that the number of people in employment increased by 33,800 in Quarter 2 of this year compared to the same period in 2012. This was the third consecutive Quarter where employment increased year-on-year. We have now moved from a situation where the private sector was losing over 7,000 jobs per month before this Government came into office, to one where it is creating close to 3,000 jobs per month. This follows on the success of Enterprise Ireland and IDA client companies in creating almost 10,000 net new jobs last year – their best performance in many years.

In Quarter 2 of this year, employment grew in nine of the fourteen economic sectors reported on by the CSO. These included Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing, Accommodation & Food Services, Wholesale & Retail, and Industry. All of these sectors have been targeted for support under the Action Plan for Jobs process.

The Government will continue to build on this progress through the Action Plan for Jobs in 2014, as we continue to transform the economy from one based on unsustainable debt to one based on enterprise, innovation and exports.

Social Welfare Fraud Investigations

80. **Deputy Ann Phelan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the new social welfare checks announced recently (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48407/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A key priority for Government is to ensure that social welfare payments are available to those who are entitled to them and that fraudulent activity is vigorously prevented and combatted. A range of measures are employed by the Department to ensure that social welfare fraud and abuse is minimised and that its control activity is appropriately focused. The approach taken by the Department to combat fraud is frequently reviewed and is regularly adjusted to ensure it is proportionate and that it is targeted on the areas of greatest risk.

Social Welfare Appeals Issues

81. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding issues raised in correspondence to her Department in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow. [48419/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an oral hearing of the appeal of the person concerned took place on 7 October 2013 and that the Appeals Officer is now considering the appeal in the light of all of the correspondence/evidence submitted, including that adduced at the oral hearing. The person concerned will be notified of the Appeals Officer's decision when the appeal has been determined.

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 in relation to social welfare entitlements.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

82. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to any cases of persons retiring at 65 qualifying for jobseeker's benefit for nine months but then failing a means test for jobseeker's allowance for the three months before their entitlement to their old age pension at 66; her plans to examine this with a view to ensuring persons on modest incomes maintain a payment in the three months until they are 66; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48425/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Jobseeker's benefit is a weekly payment to people out of work and covered by social insurance. If a person does not qualify for JB they may qualify for means tested jobseeker's allowance. The Revised Estimates for the Department provide for expenditure on the jobseeker's schemes of €3.66 billion in 2013.

Budget 2013 provided that the duration for which jobseeker's benefit is paid has been reduced from 12 months to 9 months for recipients with 260 or more contributions paid and from 9 months to 6 months for recipients with less than 260 contributions paid.

Legislation provides that, subject to the person having paid 156 or more qualifying contributions and satisfying the general scheme conditions, a person whose JB expires in their 65th year will continue to be paid benefit up until the age of 66. On this basis, workers who suffer a substantial loss of employment at age 65 will generally be able to claim jobseeker's benefit for the full year to age 66 provided they have paid at least 156 qualifying contributions.

Question No. 83 withdrawn.

Social Welfare Eligibility

84. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the limbo situation many unemployed persons find themselves in after being self-employed and unable to receive either jobseeker's benefit or jobseeker's allowance; if her attention has been further drawn to the fact that they are then unable to access schemes aimed at unemployed persons including the momentum project FÁS, JobBridge national internship

scheme, employer job PRSI incentive scheme, back to education allowance, back to work enterprise allowance scheme, short term enterprise allowance scheme or INTREO; the options available to those who do not have access to the listed schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48434/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Any person of working age who does not qualify for jobseeker's benefit may claim means tested jobseeker's allowance. Subject to means and other qualifying conditions, self-employed persons may claim jobseeker's allowance if their business ceases or there is reduced demand for their services. Typically over 80% of jobseeker's allowance claims from self-employed persons have been awarded over recent years. Previously self-employed persons in receipt of jobseeker's allowance have access to the full range of activation measures available to other job-seeker's allowance recipients.

Given the scale of unemployment levels, the key objective of activation policy and labour market initiatives is to offer assistance to those most 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. However, many services are available to the formerly self-employed who are not in receipt of a social welfare payment.

For example employment services, such as advice on job-search activities and the use of online job search tools, are available to people if they register with the Department's employment services offices, regardless of their social welfare status.

Further, unemployed persons not in receipt of payments, including the previously self-employed, may also be eligible to avail of up-skilling opportunities, for example through ETB (formerly FÁS) training for unemployed people, but are not eligible to receive a training allowance while undertaking the course. Springboard and Skillnets courses for unemployed people, funded through the Department of Education and Skills, are also open to people who were previously self-employed, regardless of their social welfare status.

Illness Benefit Applications

85. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she is satisfied that a person in full time work for the past twenty years should receive a reduced rate of illness benefit this year as her Department reference year of 2011 was the year the person was on maternity leave with reduced salary; if it is possible for her Department to reference any other year that the person was full time employed and paid full rate PRSI; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48445/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Illness benefit is a payment made to insured people who are unable to work due to illness and who satisfy certain PRSI contribution conditions.

Under the Social Protection Regulations, the rate payable on illness benefit claims depends on a person's earnings in the governing contribution year. The governing contribution year is the second last complete tax year before the year in which a claim is made. So, for claims made in 2013, the relevant tax/PRSI year is 2011. The person concerned made a claim for illness benefit on 21st October 2013. The governing contribution year in respect of their claim is thus 2011. The governing contribution year is determined by legislation therefore it is not possible to use an alternative reference year.

A person who qualifies for illness benefit at a reduced rate may claim a top-up payment of supplementary welfare allowance if their means are insufficient to meet their needs. They should contact the Department of Social Protection representative at their local health centre in order that their entitlement can be assessed.

Back to Education Allowance Eligibility

86. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will review the refusal of back to education allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare who was refused on the basis of not being in receipt of jobseeker's allowance when they were out of work for two years but who would have been in receipt of jobseeker's allowance were it not for the fact that they suffered a health setback and received disability allowance instead; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48447/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A person wishing to pursue a course of study under the back to education allowance scheme will have to satisfy a number of conditions such as being a certain age, in receipt of a prescribed social welfare payment for a specified time period, pursuing a full time course of study.

Currently the period for which a person is required to be on a qualifying social welfare payment, such as jobseekers, before assessing the third level option is 9 months (234 days) and 3 months (78 days) for second level option. Periods spent on relevant social welfare payments or on jobseekers/illness benefit credits that are not broken by more than 12 months (52 weeks), can be used in determining if an applicant satisfies the qualifying period criteria.

The person concerned made an application for back to education allowance on 3rd October, 2013. His application was refused as he was not in receipt of a prescribed Social Welfare payment immediately prior to the official commencement date of his course. He was notified of this decision on 7th October, 2013.

Question No. 87 withdrawn.

Exchequer Savings

88. **Deputy Tom Barry** asked the Minister for Social Protection the expected savings to the Exchequer from projected growth and the consequent reduction in the live register numbers in 2014. [48458/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The 2014 Budget Day Estimates for jobseeker's allowance and jobseeker's benefit provide for expenditure of €3.27 billion in 2014. This provision is nearly €0.4 billion less than the provision of €3.66 billion for these schemes in the Revised Estimates Volume for 2013.

JobBridge Scheme Evaluation

89. **Deputy Tom Barry** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to review and enhance the JobBridge scheme. [48459/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Indecon Evaluation Report published by the Taoiseach and myself on 1st May 2013 provided a number of key recommen-

datations to enhance the effectiveness of the scheme.

The Department has already taken a number of key actions in response to these recommendations including increasing the number of internships that a jobseeker may undertake, improving the Department's quality and control checks and providing even more support to interns with a significant increase in monitoring and site visits being conducted by Department officials. Codes of practice have also been developed to improve the quality of placements and key pilots have been implemented in the arts and crafts sectors.

The Department has also commenced a process to redevelop the JobBridge website's design, application and content thereby improving the client experience. I will continue to review all aspects of the scheme and changes to improve the quality of the scheme will continue to be implemented where appropriate.

Question No. 90 withdrawn.

Social Welfare Code

91. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Social Protection if it is possible for someone in receipt of the automatic extra €10 for being over 80 to give up that extra payment and the procedure in doing same as they find the extra payment puts them over certain income limits; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48498/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The over 80 allowance of €10 per week is automatically paid to recipients of State pension on attaining 80 years of age. The enabling legislation provides for this automatic payment. There is no scope to opt in or out of the increase in question.

All social welfare means-tested payments are provided to those with specific support needs. It would not be appropriate for those with higher incomes to re-arrange their financial affairs in order to benefit from schemes that are targeted at those most in need.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

92. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue on a claim for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48509/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I can confirm that the carer's allowance payments to the person concerned were suspended in May 2013 pending a report from a social welfare investigative officer. There is evidence that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are not satisfied. It is expected that the investigative officer will shortly complete and submit the report and a deciding officer will review and decide upon entitlement of the person in question.

Community Work Initiatives

93. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will consider reviewing the selection process for participants on the Tús community work placement initiative, to include a facility whereby unemployed persons who meet the scheme's qualifying

criteria can proactively apply to participate, rather than the random selection process currently operated by her Department. [48512/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Tús, the community work placement initiative introduced during 2011, was established to provide 5,000 short-term, quality work opportunities for those who are unemployed for more than a year. The initiative was expanded during 2013 to enable an additional 2,500 per annum to participate. Some 7,320 were on the Tús payroll on 8 November 2013 (including supervisors/team leaders), and some 14,220 have participated since the scheme's inception. A key feature of Tús is that all selection is undertaken by random processes conducted at local level by the Department of Social Protection. The selection is focused on those on the Live Register for a year or more and in receipt of a jobseekers' payment who have more limited job or work placement opportunities.

Tús is one of a number of interventions my Department funds and manages to enable the attainment of the priorities established by the Government in Pathways to Work. Community employment and JobBridge operate on the basis on a self-selecting basis whereby a person who is unemployed can apply to participate. Advice on the opportunities across a range of work placement, internships, self-employment, training and educational supports and options can be accessed via the Department's offices and Intreo service and further information is available on the Department's website - www.welfare.ie.

Illness Benefit Payments

94. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of claimants of incapacity benefit whose main reason is alcoholism; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48516/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Illness benefit is a payment for people who cannot work due to illness and who satisfy the Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions. Incapacity codes are recorded on claims during the claim registration process. As of 8 November 2013, 124 claims out of a total of 59,696 claims awarded and in payment have an incapacity code recorded as alcoholism. This equates to 0.21% of the total claimload.

Social Welfare Appeals Issues

95. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason the file pertaining to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 22 has not been forwarded to the appeals office by her Department; when it will be provided to that office; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48519/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am informed by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that, an appeal by the person concerned was registered on 20 June 2013 and in accordance with the statutory requirements, the Appeals Office contacted the appellant and asked her to set out the complete grounds of her appeal. This information was submitted on 17 July 2013 and in accordance with the statutory procedures, the Department was asked to provide the documentation in the case and the Deciding Officer's comments on the grounds of the appeal.

These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 6 November 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.

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 in relation to social welfare entitlements.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

96. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Social Protection the entitlement to contributory pension a person has if that person has ten continuous years of paid reckonable contributions from age 55 to 65, if previous legislation entitled a person with such a contribution history to a full contributory pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48568/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The State pension is a very valuable asset and it is important, that those who receive it have made a significant contribution towards it during a working life.

In order to qualify for a minimum State pension contributory, a person must satisfy a number of qualifying conditions which include:

- commencing insurable employment at least 10 years before pension age,
- payment of a minimum of 520 qualifying contributions and
- achieving a yearly average of at least 10 qualifying contributions, paid or credited, over their working life.

This requirement for 260 paid contributions to 520 paid contributions changed in 2012, but had been provided for in legislation since 1997. Notwithstanding this change, it is not possible for anyone to achieve a maximum pension with ten years paid contributions. The qualifying criteria as set out above provides for a minimum pension. Recent State pension reform measures have not changed this rule.

A yearly average of 48 contributions or more over the working life is required in order to qualify for a maximum pension. The longer a person works and pays employment contributions, the higher the amount they achieve in pension payment in retirement.

Social Welfare Benefits

97. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will confirm if it is compulsory that social welfare recipients must now receive payments via bank transfer; the reason for same; if there are circumstances in which a person may have payments via An Post; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48577/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department of Social Protection is a key player in the payment services sector in Ireland with over 87 million payments issued to customers in 2012. The current range of payment options includes payment to an account in a bank, building society or certain credit unions that have been authorised by the banking and credit union regulators, payment at a local post office or payment by cheque.

The Department has undertaken a root and branch examination of its payment processes, methods and approaches. This resulted in the preparation of a Payment Strategy which was

approved by Government and will be published before the end of the year. The aim of the Payment Strategy is to modernise the Department's payment delivery approach by delivering payments to customers electronically and in a way that facilitates direct debits, ATM withdrawal, point of sale deductions and online payments by customers. The Strategy has the goal of reducing significantly the level at which welfare payments are made in cash. At present, 50% of all social welfare payments are disbursed in cash. This amounted to approximately €9.5 billion distributed over 43.7 million transactions last year. The analysis undertaken for the Payment Strategy indicates the very significant variation in the cost of different payment methods. The cost of issuing a welfare payment in cash is six and a half times more than paying to an account in a financial institution and three times more than issuing a payment by cheque rather than EFT.

The Payment Strategy sets out a multi-phased approach to be implemented over five years. The first phase has commenced with contract negotiations underway with An Post to maintain existing over the counter cash services. This will ensure that customers can continue to receive their payments in cash at local post offices for the foreseeable future. It provides an assurance in the continuity of cash payments to customers for up to six years while other aspects of the Strategy are progressing.

The next phase of the Strategy will be the progressive migration of customers to Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) payments. The move to electronic payments for social welfare transactions is a trend that has been apparent for some time, and we have seen that most new social welfare customers (aside from jobseekers) are choosing EFT as their preferred method of payment. Last year four out of every five new customers claiming child benefit elected to be paid into an account. The Department does not intend migrating higher risk customers to an electronic payment until appropriate and robust measures are defined and fully implemented to mitigate any potential for increased risk of fraud within an electronic payments environment.

Moving to electronic payments will require a significant effort to assist and support suitable customers over the five year period. The Department will work energetically to help customers and their representatives in the transition period. The Deputy can, however, be assured that customers will not be refused a payment simply because they cannot receive it electronically.

National Monuments

98. **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will investigate the acquisition, for the State, of Tullira Castle, Adrahan, County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48444/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Tullira Castle, built in 1882 with an adjoining fifteenth-century tower, is included in the Record of Monuments and Places maintained by my Department under the National Monuments Acts. Accordingly, it benefits from the range of protections afforded by that designation, including a requirement that any proposed works at the site must be notified to my Department. The Castle is further safeguarded through its listing in Galway County Council's Record of Protected Structures under the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2012.

The property has been wonderfully restored and maintained by its owners. I do not consider that it would be of benefit to the property to include it among the national monuments or historic properties currently in my ownership, as Minister, even if the financial resources were available to me for this purpose.

Commemorative Events

99. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will report on the engagement between his Department and Údarás na Gaeltachta on the upgrade of Pearse's Cottage, Rosmuc, particularly in the context of the centenary commemorations. [48573/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): As the Deputy is aware, under the Capital Stimulus Package announced in the Budget, funding of €6m was provided for 2014 in respect of the 1916 Commemorations Programme. A number of projects come under the scope of this programme, including the GPO, the Military Archives and Pearse's Cottage in Ros Muc. While no specific amount has been allocated at this juncture from the €6m to any of these projects, I understand that it is intended to address that issue in the context of the forthcoming publication of the Revised Estimates Volume.

Further consideration will have to be given, in consultation with the various key stakeholders, to the appropriate steps to be taken to advance the project at Pearse's Cottage, taking into account the overall resources that will be available under the 1916 Commemorations Programme. In this context, my Department recently held an initial meeting with the various stakeholders, including the OPW, Galway County Council, Údarás na Gaeltachta and Bord Fáilte, to progress the matter.

The Deputy can be assured that officials from my Department are in regular contact with Údarás na Gaeltachta in relation to this matter.

Better Energy Homes Scheme Expenditure

100. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide a county breakdown of the amount of money spent and units upgraded under the better energy homes scheme in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. [48485/13]

101. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide a county breakdown of the amount of money spent and units upgraded under the better energy warmer homes scheme in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. [48486/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 100 and 101 together.

The Better Energy Homes and the Better Energy Warmer Homes Schemes are administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) under the Better Energy Programme.

The Better Energy Homes Scheme provides support to homeowners towards the installation of attic and wall insulation, and heating system upgrades including solar thermal with the works being undertaken by privately appointed contractors.

The Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme delivers a range of energy efficiency measures to low income households who meet the defined eligibility criteria of the scheme and who are vulnerable to energy poverty. The scheme is delivered through a combination of SEAI appointed Community Based Organisations (CBOs), augmented by a panel of private contractors in order to ensure national coverage. The scheme is also delivered through a separate strand via an area based approach. Measures available include: draught proofing, attic insulation, lagging

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jackets for hot water tanks, low energy light bulbs and cavity wall insulation and are free of charge to the customer.

The table provides details of the amount of Exchequer funding disbursed, and the number of homes upgraded with energy efficiency measures, by county, in respect of both Schemes, in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013.

Better Energy Homes Scheme:

--	2010	-	2011	-	2012	-	2013	-	-	-
County	Homes Completed	Grant Value	Total Homes Completed	Total Grant Value						
Carlow	465	€388,327	445	€356,523	255	€253,720	154	€128,970	1,319	€1,127,540
Cavan	1,015	€887,190	1,098	€970,264	437	€344,955	154	€130,020	2,704	€2,332,430
Clare	2,926	€2,480,184	2,613	€2,896,688	998	€1,066,900	360	€308,340	6,897	€6,752,112
Cork	5,521	€5,672,383	7,492	€8,503,414	4,434	€4,299,060	2,200	€1,873,405	19,647	€20,348,262
Donegal	1,633	€1,413,339	1,487	€1,330,593	579	€531,175	154	€135,305	3,853	€3,410,413
Dublin	6,066	€8,451,049	7,300	€12,219,962	5,373	€7,726,534	2,761	€3,318,266	21,500	€31,715,810
Galway	4,087	€3,362,419	4,141	€3,457,468	1,966	€1,559,360	759	€577,801	10,953	€8,957,048
Kerry	3,067	€2,833,275	2,546	€2,721,696	1,045	€1,059,895	468	€445,740	7,126	€7,060,606
Kildare	1,118	€1,195,745	1,179	€1,317,942	747	€739,766	357	€322,095	3,401	€3,575,548
Kilkenny	1,216	€975,171	1,070	€1,009,134	465	€469,430	169	€156,390	2,920	€2,610,125
Laois	711	€572,928	755	€603,926	366	€253,940	120	€111,953	1,952	€1,542,747
Leitrim	280	€256,000	247	€246,470	163	€148,970	43	€36,900	733	€688,340
Limerick	3,410	€3,344,491	3,743	€5,087,731	1,696	€2,341,510	526	€484,440	9,375	€11,258,171
Longford	521	€439,543	379	€359,850	172	€183,760	57	€41,690	1,129	€1,024,843
Louth	1,174	€1,041,784	1,095	€1,055,967	721	€515,744	435	€289,780	3,425	€2,903,275
Mayo	1,186	€1,035,540	1,767	€1,704,304	898	€934,388	206	€235,974	4,057	€3,910,206
Meath	1,226	€1,134,225	1,216	€1,283,818	678	€654,323	434	€402,840	3,554	€3,475,207
Monaghan	869	€967,375	892	€1,090,371	413	€444,450	97	€87,760	2,271	€2,589,956
Offaly	533	€497,545	525	€496,608	319	€322,150	136	€119,400	1,513	€1,435,703
Roscommon	845	€708,530	801	€771,392	363	€329,445	119	€101,560	2,128	€1,910,927
Sligo	607	€538,448	570	€545,042	350	€307,602	117	€108,340	1,644	€1,499,432
Tipperary	2,139	€2,014,001	2,500	€3,202,252	1,093	€1,346,078	366	€333,922	6,098	€6,896,253
Waterford	1,624	€1,572,646	1,965	€2,683,427	1,184	€1,380,139	438	€386,055	5,211	€6,022,267
Westmeath	740	€722,960	756	€792,999	369	€340,810	147	€147,430	2,012	€2,004,199
Wexford	2,252	€1,769,837	1,835	€1,561,634	839	€631,036	356	€243,620	5,282	€4,206,127
Wicklow	731	€932,952	819	€1,326,849	503	€764,609	261	€298,110	2,314	€3,322,519
Grand Total	45,962	€45,207,885	49,236	€57,596,324	26,426	€28,949,749	11,394	€10,826,106	133,018	€142,580,064

Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme:

Counties	2010	2011	2012	2013 YTD	Total
Carlow	537	213	220	128	1,098
Cavan	364	323	267	107	1,061
Clare	349	1,353	345	200	2,247
Cork	3,581	2,406	1,140	632	7,759
Donegal	717	922	634	516	2,789
Dublin	2,836	2,756	1,893	1,458	8,943
Galway	1,191	2,133	580	380	4,284
Kerry	762	587	575	263	2,187
Kildare	1,318	377	196	137	2,028
Kilkenny	436	445	209	113	1,203
Laois	622	412	94	80	1,208

Counties	2010	2011	2012	2013 YTD	Total
Leitrim	299	256	220	169	944
Limerick	808	1,016	1,019	1,283	4,126
Longford	297	199	164	141	801
Louth	1,167	360	157	120	1,804
Mayo	928	1,251	983	547	3,709
Meath	954	310	241	118	1,623
Monaghan	318	248	286	146	998
Offaly	643	586	258	206	1,693
Roscommon	536	533	319	161	1,549
Sligo	628	511	278	194	1,611
Tipperary	1,609	1,571	624	177	3,981
Waterford	1,003	387	372	222	1,984
Westmeath	732	278	194	128	1,332
Wexford	730	713	705	391	2,539
Wicklow	926	242	202	184	1,554
-	Total	Total	Total	Total*	Grand Total
-	24,291	20,388	12,175	8,201	65,055

*To 7 November 2013

Telecommunications Services Provision

102. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the action that will be taken to improve Internet access in an area (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48392/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Ireland's telecommunications market has been fully liberalised since 1999 in accordance with the requirements of binding EU Directives. The market has since developed into a well-regulated market, supporting a multiplicity of commercial operators, providing services over a diverse range of technology platforms. Commercial decisions by individual private operators in relation to its infrastructure are a matter for the company concerned. Any regulatory issues surrounding the provision of services are the responsibility of ComReg, which is independent in the exercise of its functions. Details of broadband services available in each County, including County Kerry, can be found on ComReg's website at www.callcosts.ie. The Government's National Broadband Plan, which I published in August 2012, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed broadband is available to all citizens and businesses, including those in County Kerry. This will be achieved by providing:

- a policy and regulatory framework that assists in accelerating and incentivising commercial investment, and

- a State-led investment for areas where it is not commercial for the market to invest.

Since the publication of the Plan, investments by the commercial sector are underway in both fixed line and wireless high speed broadband services. ComReg has put in place a new regulatory regime for fixed line Next Generation Access and for service bundles, both of which are designed to incentivise the roll-out of services by service providers. ComReg's multiband spectrum auction, completed in 2012, is also enabling the roll-out of advanced mobile broadband services.

The State can only intervene to ensure access to broadband services in areas where the competitive market fails to deliver such services. In order to progress the State-led investment for areas where it is not commercial for the market to invest, a full procurement process must be designed and EU State Aids approval must be obtained. My Department is engaged in a comprehensive mapping exercise of the current and anticipated investment by the commercial sector to identify where the market is expected to deliver high speed broadband services over the coming years. The results of this mapping exercise will inform the precise areas that need to be targeted in the State-led investment as envisaged in the National Broadband Plan.

Intensive technical, financial and legal preparations, including stakeholder engagement, are ongoing. The procurement process for the approved intervention will be carried out in accordance with EU and Irish procurement rules and it is expected that it will be launched in 2014. Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, I am committed to ensuring that all parts of Ireland have access to high speed broadband, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses can participate fully in, and maximise the benefits of, a digitally enabled economy and society.

Better Energy Homes Scheme Expenditure

103. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of applicants in County Meath that have received funding under the better energy warmer homes scheme and the better energy homes scheme; the total amount of State funding that has been paid out to applicants in County Meath under each of these schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48469/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Better Energy Homes and the Better Energy Warmer Homes Schemes are administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) under the Better Energy Programme. The Better Energy Homes Scheme provides support to homeowners towards a range of energy efficiency home improvements. Since the introduction of the Better Energy Homes Scheme in 2009, 4,083 homes in Co. Meath have received grants amounting to €3.95m. The following table provides an annual breakdown of grant support:

-	Year	Homes	Spend
Meath	2009	529	€476,135.86
Meath	2010	1226	€1,134,225.39
Meath	2011	1216	€1,283,818.03
Meath	2012	678	€654,323.22
Meath	2013	434	€402,840.00

The Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme delivers a range of energy efficiency measures to low income households who meet the defined eligibility criteria and who are vulnerable to energy poverty. Recipients of the scheme do not receive grants but have measures installed free of charge. Since 2009, 2,474 homes in Co. Meath have received energy efficiency upgrades under the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Status

104. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied with the rate of progress regarding the upgrade of the Clonakilty

sewerage scheme following his Department's allocation of €5.5 million 12 months ago; when these works are scheduled to begin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48391/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Clonakilty Sewerage Scheme (Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade) Contract is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2013 as a contract to start during the life of the Programme and I have approved funding to allow work to commence. I understand that Cork County Council awarded the Design Build Contract for the upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant on 13 May 2013. A large element of the initial work comprised of detailed design by the Contractor. Cork County Council expects that work will commence on site this week.

Seniors Alert Scheme Issues

105. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total number of persons who received benefits under the seniors alert scheme between 2010 to date in 2013; the total amount of expenditure allocated to this scheme for each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48413/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Seniors Alert Scheme aims to encourage community support for vulnerable older people in our communities by providing grant assistance towards the purchase and installation of personal monitored alarms to enable older persons, of limited means, to continue to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind. The Scheme is administered by local community and voluntary groups with the support of my Department. The following table outlines the allocation for the Seniors Alert Scheme and the overall number of beneficiaries from 2010 to date:

Year	Allocation	Beneficiaries
2010	€3.10m	6,306
2011	€2.35 m	7,910
2012	€2.35 m	9,142
2013 (to date)	€ 2.35 m	8,439

Local Authority Charges Non-Payment

106. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of persons who are accumulating penalties as a result of not paying the non-principal private residence charge; and the amount outstanding. [48418/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009 broadened the revenue base of local authorities by introducing a charge on non-principal private residences. The self-assessed charge is set at €200 per annum and liability for it falls, in the main, on owners of rental, holiday and vacant properties. Under the Act, it is a function of a local authority to collect Non-Principal Private Residence Charges, and late payment fees due to it and all Charges and late payment fees imposed and payable to a local authority are under the care and management of the local authority concerned.

Approximately 357,000 properties have been registered for the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge, which has raised in excess of €390m over its five years of operation. It is not

possible to state with any certainty the level of non-compliance with the Charge, and therefore an estimate of the amount outstanding would not be sound. However, I am confident that compliance levels are high, given the amount raised by the Charge to date. This year will be the final year of the operation of the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge. Since its introduction in 2009, the Charge has been an important source of revenue for local authorities and has funded the provision of vital local services.

Local Authorities Management

107. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that no meeting of Sligo Borough Council has taken place since 1 July 2013; if his further attention has been drawn to the fact that the executive of Sligo Borough Council has ignored several formal requests from the Mayor of Sligo, as per the standing orders of the council, to convene monthly meetings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48446/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 681 and 706 of 5 November 2013 which sets out the position in this matter.

Departmental Expenditure

108. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 117 of 6 November 2013, if he will provide details of funding that the ILDN received annually since 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48470/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN), which was formally established in 2010, is the umbrella organisation for Local Development Companies (LDCs). These LDCs deliver both the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) and the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (RDP) on behalf of my Department. My Department has an annual contract with ILDN, which is renewed on the basis of an agreed and costed annual work plan. The funding provided by my Department to ILDN under the annual contract supports a range of consultative, networking, communication, information and promotional purposes. The funding received by the ILDN for the years in question is outlined in the table.

Year	Funding Received
2008	€0
2009	€63,750 (included some set up costs)
2010	€174,105
2011	€193,557
2012	€157,730
2013 to date	€85,500 (full allocation for 2013 is €171,000)

Local Development Network

109. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the stages in the consultation process he engaged in with the Irish Local

Development Network which will deliver the LCDP-RDP in the future; and if the administration of shared services will be done by local authority staff. [48472/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department has engaged with the Irish Local Development Network as part of the Alignment Working Group. The Working Group, which also comprises representatives of other stakeholders including the City/County Managers Association and Pobal, was established to assist the Department in the implementation of the Alignment recommendations as set out in Putting People First - Action Programme for Effective Local Government.

As part of its work, the Group has considered the future arrangements for the implementation of local and community development programmes managed by my Department. It is intended that these programmes will be implemented in the future by the Local Community Development Committees; however, a number of options for local delivery are being considered by the Group and I expect to receive its recommendations in the near future.

The Working Group has not yet considered the matter of shared service arrangements for future programmes, and I will await its work in this regard before making any decision. To ensure a continued focus on funding for frontline services, it is important that the future implementation of programmes maximise available administration funding and all shared service opportunities.

Local Development Companies Administration

110. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will clarify arrangements for the north inner city of Dublin as the proposed system for local development is based on a structure the inner city does not have due to the absence of an inner city partnership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48473/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Arising from Putting People First - Action Programme for Effective Local Government, new arrangements will come into effect aimed at improving the delivery of services on an area basis through Local Community Development Committees. I see the Local Community Development Committee for the Dublin City Council area having a key role in the future co-ordination arrangements for the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP), across its area of coverage, including the inner city area.

Since the cessation of the contract with Dublin Inner City Partnership (DICP) for the delivery of the LCDP, my Department, in conjunction with Pobal, has ensured that LCDP services, for the communities in the inner city area, have been maintained in a coordinated manner. This has been achieved, through Pobal, by contracting local delivery bodies in the area to deliver LCDP services formerly delivered through the DICP. This method of programme delivery will continue for the immediate future.

My Department and Pobal will work with local partners in identifying the best approach for programme implementation and co-ordination once the new local structures are fully operational. I am committed to ensuring that these valuable services are delivered to those who need them most and in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Housing Adaptation Grants Funding

111. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a county breakdown of the amount of money spent and units upgraded under the mobility aids grant scheme in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. [48482/13]

112. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a county breakdown of the amount of money spent and units upgraded under the housing aid for older persons scheme in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. [48483/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 111 and 112 together.

My Department’s involvement with the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability relates primarily to the recoupment of a proportion of local authority expenditure on the payment of individual grants. These schemes, introduced in November 2007, are funded by 80% recoupments available from my Department together with a 20% contribution from the resources of the local authority. The detailed administration of these schemes, including the apportionment of funding between the various grant measures and the assessment, approval and payment of grants to individual applicants under the various grant measures, is the responsibility of the relevant local authority.

Details of the numbers of grants paid each year together with the monies recouped to the local authorities since 2010 in respect the Housing Aid for Older People (HAOP) and the Mobility Aids Grant (MAG) are set out in the following tables:

-	--	2010	-	-	-	2011	-	-
County		HAOP		MAG		HAOP		MAG
Carlow	94	€438,330	42	€147,461	171	€726,992	35	€137,725
Cavan	103	€577,025	35	€134,459	92	€531,589	46	€178,195
Clare	223	€927,877	83	€294,616	326	€1,426,577	71	€248,420
Cork	830	€4,117,365	191	€708,375	805	€3,407,362	193	€740,875
Donegal	369	€1,143,977	89	€184,338	277	€605,478	25	€28,055
DL /Rathdown	36	€262,487	9	€28,766	46	€180,789	16	€55,928
Fingal	127	€671,056	10	€24,732	95	€546,135	21	€67,550
Galway	262	€917,644	61	€143,606	346	€1,264,271	165	€362,968
Kerry	453	€2,060,308	150	€463,891	479	€2,020,207	183	€582,117
Kildare	334	€2,086,602	22	€61,148	289	€1,721,689	17	€58,282
Kilkenny	228	€1,009,589	13	€43,205	246	€1,168,804	62	€220,029
Laois	185	€757,304	50	€166,491	85	€354,800	54	€178,744
Leitrim	86	€440,566	37	€89,188	63	€213,320	20	€40,693
Limerick	193	€951,501	73	€253,673	169	€765,528	62	€192,552
Longford	175	€552,687	70	€184,677	165	€584,699	47	€130,616
Louth	76	€328,095	1	€2,200	79	€300,711	4	€12,096
Mayo	554	€1,878,163	226	€562,041	430	€1,455,218	153	€357,604
Meath	34	€199,101	81	€309,497	67	€395,919	14	€47,263
Monaghan	70	€288,962	70	€267,175	80	€344,305	75	€297,099
North Tipp	106	€475,930	75	€297,500	97	€424,524	52	€194,376
Offaly	80	€506,150	5	€18,502	79	€553,157	8	€30,514
Roscommon	257	€1,313,708	29	€106,764	159	€721,081	36	€99,190
Sligo	91	€457,800	26	€72,192	74	€303,939	26	€71,133
South Dublin	115	€427,958	40	€115,327	50	€175,775	43	€123,928
South Tipperary	184	€948,084	68	€281,498	236	€1,113,245	47	€188,364

-	--	2010	-	-	-	2011	-	-
County		HAOP		MAG		HAOP		MAG
Waterford	112	€511,574	15	€63,200	63	€271,306	22	€76,882
Westmeath	183	€632,799	43	€144,274	112	€394,907	32	€110,299
Wexford	347	€1,586,384	117	€420,149	267	€1,236,279	134	€478,651
Wicklow	84	€393,031	49	€191,820	69	€289,487	31	€92,026
Cork City	251	€1,037,744	14	€49,294	330	€1,114,057	26	€95,254
Dublin City	527	€1,481,399	63	€227,423	246	€875,136	54	€196,886
Galway City	22	€85,578	10	€31,763	82	€341,198	26	€77,500
Limerick City	194	€798,750	79	€263,638	226	€875,025	103	€352,779
Waterford City	113	€240,472	84	€323,659	75	€259,199	58	€218,364
Sligo Borough	80	€267,980	6	€10,990	36	€138,967	15	€39,885

-	-	2011	-	-	-	2013 (to end October)	-	-
County		HAOP		MAG		HAOP		MAG
Carlow	113	€497,886	29	€104,254	33	€128,622.00	39	€156,704.00
Cavan	54	€357,349	59	€244,014	40	€239,208.00	27	€118,080.00
Clare	71	€332,031	44	€153,588	71	€251,394.40	44	€148,269.74
Cork	956	€4,265,333	240	€1,001,838	45	€206,030.00	70	€272,270.00
Donegal	116	€226,617	26	€32,734	52	€130,278.60	11	€21,308.00
DL /Rathdown	27	€98,304	13	€42,270	22	€76,423.48	4	€10,439.05
Fingal	79	€502,000	68	€226,822	6	€49,574.00	32	€108,389.00
Galway	378	€1,447,236	108	€240,595	178	€600,385.60	77	€162,603.00
Kerry	372	€1,337,391	133	€420,557	62	€166,171.00	106	€338,227.00
Kildare	114	€635,202	24	€77,681	1	€4,160.00	7	€27,196.00
Kilkenny	148	€743,827	41	€149,588	66	€331,106.20	20	€79,297.28
Laois	104	€335,080	70	€200,920	22	€66,280.00	43	€116,600.00
Leitrim	59	€228,791	26	€62,643	7	€33,635.20	5	€10,928.80
Limerick	92	€438,846	108	€359,167	69	€327,179.33	60	€201,957.28
Longford	105	€339,171	61	€181,806	68	€269,095.00	49	€151,336.00
Louth	7	€23,039	6	€10,621	8	€30,071.00	0	€0.00
Mayo	419	€1,395,935	154	€350,940	281	€977,964.33	150	€375,089.40
Meath	67	€367,625	24	€87,443	4	€17,265.60	2	€5,870.22
Monaghan	104	€364,926	70	€237,999	51	€184,613.86	33	€111,478.68
North Tipp	53	€250,658	53	€191,303	21	€91,160.00	23	€77,441.34
Offaly	30	€199,103	4	€15,783	45	€194,225.00	3	€9,600.00
Roscommon	84	€362,880	9	€20,389	20	€107,199	0	0
Sligo	102	€361,228	15	€43,227	8	€25,639.00	16	€49,686
South Dublin	34	€112,770	83	€252,689	22	€78,825.94	47	€160,966.21
South Tipperary	107	€528,100	66	€258,066	44	€216,610.00	24	€158,322.00
Waterford	65	€364,094	29	€100,675	3	€20,454.50	7	€25,416.00
Westmeath	93	€279,121	32	€93,506	47	€152,112.00	17	€52,601.60
Wexford	220	€990,274	143	€500,986	44	€181,170.20	61	€191,188.80
Wicklow	37	€153,985	53	€143,442	8	€24,344.20	35	€95,675.20
Cork City	86	€297,693	10	€42,889	164	€581,562.40	10	€24,512.00
Dublin City	182	€656,383	75	€273,181	75	€324,114.10	41	€139,606.89
Galway City	81	€311,682	40	€115,904	43	€147,165.00	13	€36,357.00
Limerick City	206	€788,927	62	€212,873	95	€371,437.15	60	€208,911.32
Waterford City	42	€166,555	76	€277,300	14	€56,055.94	31	€132,889.09
Sligo Borough*	41	€149,773	12	€36,580	0	€0.00	0	0

*Merged with Sligo Co. Co. 1/1/2013

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

113. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a county breakdown of the amount of money spent and units upgraded under the improvement works in lieu of local authority housing scheme in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. [48484/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Improvement Works in Lieu (IWIL) scheme allows local authorities to improve or extend privately owned accommodation which is occupied or intended to be occupied by an applicant approved for social housing as an alternative to the provision of social housing.

Under my Department's Social Housing Investment Programme, funding is provided to housing authorities in respect of the IWIL scheme and for the provision of necessary adaptations or extensions to properties to meet the needs of tenants with a disability (DPG). It is a matter for each local authority to decide the specific level of funding to be directed to each of these measures out of the allocations provided. Details of the amounts recouped to local authorities for the period 2010 to 2012 and the initial allocations for 2013 are set out in the following table.

IWIL's & DPG's

Local Authority	2010	2011	2012	Initial Allocation 2013
Carlow County	€287,000	€510,677	€611,758	€45,311
Cavan County	€121,762	€207,331	€76,328	€49,356
Clare County	€214,452	€172,458	€155,630	€54,358
Cork City	€921,083	€858,066	€168,262	€114,561
Cork County	€862,330	€300,741	€124,209	€135,162
Donegal County	€418,786	€308,044	€161,231	€83,010
Dublin City	€843,295	€430,587	€1,661,596	€300,000
Dun Laoghaire/ Rathdown County	€300,835	€329,224	€631,463	€80,150
Fingal County	€304,331	€681,627	€189,249	€83,581
Galway City	€0	€204,782	€92,647	€53,249
Galway County	€82,977	€167,241	€103,356	€54,812
Kerry County	€327,538	€488,555	€263,369	€76,811
Kildare County	€344,838	€459,256	€194,318	€70,058
Kilkenny County	€147,181	€348,203	€302,575	€52,065
Laois County	€162,185	€183,362	€106,504	€50,742
Leitrim County	€70,000	€122,195	€32,398	€37,512
Limerick City	€200,000	€109,821	€85,187	€64,488
Limerick County	€299,558	€383,677	€106,798	€51,977
Longford County	€140,450	€155,213	€113,001	€49,066
Louth County	€463,913	€525,808	€159,804	€71,166
Mayo County	€434,092	€282,041	€306,383	€52,418
Meath County	€244,568	€190,112	€155,059	€62,586
Monaghan County	€96,802	€77,773	€136,436	€42,375

Local Authority	2010	2011	2012	Initial Allocation 2013
Offaly County	€146,000	€306,797	€74,320	€47,063
Roscommon County	€187,845	€94,173	€240,889	€42,023
Sligo County	€166,445	€213,996	€149,725	€50,679
South Dublin County	€285,417	€312,831	€340,845	€138,854
Tipperary North County	€120,862	€305,242	€555,027	€47,932
Tipperary South County	€317,202	€332,048	€196,350	€61,288
Waterford City	€196,889	€154,555	€324,029	€63,241
Waterford County	€115,878	€210,088	€136,808	€47,264
Westmeath County	€132,151	€152,809	€102,113	€46,571
Wexford County	€150,000	€439,946	€353,279	€78,122
Wicklow County	€351,292	€158,323	€291,983	€80,994
Total	€9,457,957	€10,177,602	€8,702,929	€2,438,845

My Department collates and publishes a wide range of housing and planning statistics that inform the preparation and evaluation of policy and those data are available on my Department's website www.enviro.ie. Data on the number of houses improved as part of the scheme are included as part of that range.

Local Government Fund

114. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a county breakdown of the local government fund allocations in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; the estimated distribution for 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48488/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I assume that the Question refers to general purpose grants from the Local Government Fund. General purpose grants are my Department's contribution towards meeting the cost to local authorities of providing a reasonable level of services to their customers.

The information requested is set out in the table which details the total general purpose grant allocations from the Local Government Fund for all local authorities in each county. The allocations for 2010 and 2011 take account of income from pension related deductions which was collected and retained by local authorities. General purpose grants for 2014 will be announced in due course.

County	2010	2011	2012	2013
-	€	€	€	€
Carlow	13,052,513	11,659,271	9,865,448	9,826,750
Cavan	19,057,097	17,268,005	14,854,931	14,745,113
Clare	16,913,007	15,338,891	12,372,506	12,159,289
Cork	80,062,339	71,568,486	56,166,379	53,795,875
Donegal	41,482,713	38,610,158	32,869,501	32,667,843

County	2010	2011	2012	2013
-	€	€	€	€
Dublin	177,483,982	158,221,861	118,005,053	113,290,760
Galway	45,483,346	41,164,039	34,775,191	33,796,527
Kerry	31,155,831	28,201,886	23,073,286	22,238,923
Kildare	27,741,406	25,950,930	21,822,765	22,244,748
Kilkenny	21,101,616	19,087,909	16,379,600	16,309,147
Laois	16,823,589	15,143,352	13,189,788	13,070,064
Leitrim	14,489,435	13,479,217	11,809,261	11,952,743
Limerick	34,319,130	30,994,565	25,651,934	25,933,791
Longford	15,005,245	13,862,073	12,126,650	12,318,890
Louth	21,514,636	19,284,802	15,928,387	15,502,375
Mayo	38,527,684	35,138,739	30,415,727	30,134,270
Meath	28,946,385	26,950,195	22,864,713	22,472,343
Monaghan	17,469,505	16,104,582	14,022,824	13,983,408
Offaly	17,404,185	15,934,486	13,711,364	13,564,713
Roscommon	20,110,463	18,490,254	15,967,965	15,828,208
Sligo	19,283,451	17,894,726	15,659,616	15,584,848
Tipperary	48,545,024	44,157,076	38,229,570	37,971,172
Waterford	30,521,544	28,149,265	23,820,851	24,264,808
Westmeath	21,797,165	20,082,314	17,313,127	17,287,004
Wexford	25,060,333	23,081,588	19,708,352	19,217,103
Wicklow	26,648,377	24,181,327	20,395,212	19,839,289

Property Taxation Collection

115. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the timeframe for the retention of 80% of locally raised property tax revenue in each local authority area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48521/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Government has indicated an intention to move to 80% retention of all Local Property Tax receipts within the local authority area where the Tax is raised. The establishment of Irish Water presents local government with significant organisational and financial challenges in 2014. In this context, it has been necessary to defer defining the proportion of the proceeds of the Local Property Tax to be retained in each local authority until 2015.

Radon Gas Levels

116. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to introduce an obligation for homeowners to test their properties for the presence of radon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48525/13]

118. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will introduce a grant aid scheme to address the widespread high incidents of radon gas in homes, particularly in County Kerry where one home has been found with 26 times the acceptable level of the cancer causing radon gas, and of the 446 homes tested in the

past year, one in six homes have radon levels in excess of the acceptable level; if he will take into consideration that homes are being devalued and all households are subject to the local property tax, and if he will immediately introduce a scheme to assist hard-pressed householders as the average cost of installing a system to address the problem is in the region of €850, with an annual running cost of €100; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48531/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 116 and 118 together.

The Government's approach to radon, which is similar to that in the majority of EU Member States, is to concentrate efforts on increasing public awareness of the risks posed by radon in the home. Through support for the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland's radon advice and awareness work, my Department is supporting efforts to raise public awareness of the risks posed by radon. Householders, particularly those in known high radon areas, have been strongly encouraged to have their homes tested for radon and to undertake remediation works where necessary.

Since 1998, the Building Regulations require all new buildings to incorporate radon protection measures at the time of construction. In October 2004, an updated edition of Technical Guidance Document C on Part C of the Building Regulations (Site Preparation and Resistance to Moisture) was published, incorporating enhanced radon prevention measures for new buildings commencing on or after 1 April 2005. This guidance document is aimed at ensuring that radon protection measures are carried out more effectively. Copies of the guidance documents are available on my Department's website - www.environ.ie.

If a dwelling is found to have a high radon level, remediation work may be recommended. Technical guidance on radon remediation techniques is available in a booklet issued by my Department, Radon in Buildings - Corrective Options, which is also available on my Department's website. The RPII has also issued guidance, Understanding Radon Remediation - A Householders Guide, available on the Institute's website at www.rpii.ie, together with a list of companies who can provide a radon remediation service and offer specific advice and recommendations. In addition, the RPII can be contacted for radon advice on free-phone 1800 300 600.

A working group from a number of Government Departments and Agencies, including the RPII and the Health Service Executive, is currently finalising a report on the development of a national radon strategy which will shortly be presented to me. I understand the report will make a series of recommendations regarding increasing awareness of radon. There are no plans at present to establish a scheme of grant assistance for radon remediation.

Leader Programmes Funding

117. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will consider a request from the South West Mayo Development Company for €1.4 million in extra funding to support projects in the county; if he will acknowledge that SWMDC took an 18% reduction in funding earlier this year, despite having to take on extra work owing to the reorganisation of MFG territory; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48530/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): South West Mayo Development Company (SWDC) is contracted on behalf of my Department in relation to the LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. During 2011, the European Commission approved a change in the maximum co-funding

rate from 55% to 85% for the LEADER elements of Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. This had the effect of reducing the available funding under the Programme from €427 million to an estimated €370 million.

It was therefore necessary to carry out a comprehensive review of the level of commitments and expenditure across the Programme in order to apportion the remaining funds among the Local Development Companies (LDCs), taking into account the level of commitments already entered into.

The redistribution of funding was conducted in as fair and equitable a manner as was possible and in the case of SWDC the revised allocation represents a decrease of 17.5% from their original allocation. Many of the other LDCs experienced similar or higher reductions.

In addition to the revised allocation which SWDC received it was also allocated a further €341,111 for the former MFG territory which it took over in 2012.

I am committed to the continued monitoring of this situation and my Department will review all commitments and expenditure levels later this month to ensure, in so far as is possible, that all available Programme funding is committed by end December 2013; allocations will again be revised if there is funding available for re-distribution.

Question No. 118 answered with Question No. 116.

Leader Programmes Funding

119. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide additional funding, from unspent Leader funding, to North and East Kerry Development Board to enable the board to urgently provide the necessary grant aid and for a proposed facility (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48534/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): North and East Kerry Leader Partnership are contracted on behalf of my Department in relation to the implementation of the LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013.

During 2011, the European Commission approved a change in the maximum co-funding rate from 55% to 85% in relation to LEADER. This had the effect of reducing the available funding under the Programme from €427 million to an estimated €370 million.

It was therefore necessary to carry out a comprehensive review of the level of commitments and expenditure across the Programme in order to apportion the remaining funds among the Local Development Companies (LDCs), taking into account the level of commitments already entered into. The redistribution of funding was conducted in as fair and equitable a manner as was possible.

I am committed to the continued monitoring of this situation and my Department will review all commitments and expenditure levels later this month to ensure, in so far as is possible, that all available Programme funding is committed by end December 2013. Allocations will again be revised if there is funding available for re-distribution.

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

120. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide an update on the allocation of money for the upgrading and renovation of local authority houses, the amount of funding that will be provided to Cork City and County Councils; when the funding will be distributed to local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48537/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 293 of 12 November, 2013 which sets out the position on this matter.

Local Government Reform

121. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans for lands (details supplied) in County Meath; when the Local Government Bill 2013 will be enacted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48538/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Government’s Action Programme for Effective Local Government sets out Government policy decisions in relation to a range of local government reform measures, including the establishment of a new comprehensive model of municipal governance to strengthen local government within counties and to address weaknesses and anomalies in the current system.

The Local Government Bill 2013 provides the legislative basis for many of the reforms set out in the Action Programme. The Bill provides that the local authority for a county will become the successor authority for all purposes where a town council is dissolved. It would therefore be a matter for Meath County Council in this case, as successor authority, to manage the lands and assets of the former town council. In response to a recent Seanad Adjournment Debate on this matter I undertook to consider any general issue arising, in the context of the Bill.

The Local Government Bill 2013 was published on 17 October 2013 and is currently at Second Stage in the Dáil. It is hoped that the Bill will be enacted during the current session, in good time for the 2014 local elections.

Water Meters Installation

122. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will support a matter (details supplied) regarding water meters. [48556/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Water Services Act 2013 provides for the establishment of Irish Water as an independent subsidiary within the Bord Gáis Éireann Group and assigns the necessary powers to allow Irish Water to undertake the water metering programme.

Regional management contractors were appointed by Irish Water following a public tendering process. These contractors have responsibility for appointing sub-contractors and it is expected they will utilise the resources of sub-contractors from a pre-qualified panel created by my Department. The contracts for the metering programme require that a minimum of 25% of the jobs be allocated to people on the live register, small businesses and school leavers/graduates gaining employment. Irish Water has informed my Department that since the start of meter-

ing in August, over 50% of people employed have come from the social inclusion target groups.

Data Protection

123. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality in view of the recent electronic security breach of a company (details supplied) which exposed the financial details of 43,000 customers, his plans to ensure companies report online security breaches to the data protection officer in a more timely and efficient manner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48523/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The position is that the law relating to the protection of personal data, including the requirement to implement appropriate security measures, is contained in the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003. This legislation requires that appropriate security measures be taken to guard against unauthorised access to, as well as any unauthorised alteration, disclosure or destruction of, personal data, and allows the Data Protection Commissioner to carry out investigations of security breaches on receipt of a complaint or on his own initiative. In 2011, the Data Protection Commissioner introduced a Code of Practice on Personal Data Security Breaches under section 13(2)(b) of the Data Protection Acts. The Code provides guidance on good practice in dealing with data security breaches, including the reporting of such breaches to the Commissioner's Office.

I am informed by the Data Protection Commissioner that his Office was notified of the data security breach referred to by the Deputy in accordance with the Personal Data Security Breach Code of Practice. Given the seriousness of the breach the Data Protection Commissioner sent in an inspection team to investigate the breach. I understand that the Commissioner has received a preliminary report on the findings of the inspection team. I also understand that the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigations has received a report on the matter and are investigating the issue further.

The European Commission published a Proposal for a General Data Protection Regulation in January 2012. The Proposal includes specific provisions in relation to the notification of personal data breaches to relevant supervisory authorities and individuals who may be affected by them. Negotiations on the Commission's proposals are ongoing at EU level.

Garda Vetting Applications

124. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reasons for the delay in providing Garda clearance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [48421/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to advise the Deputy that the vetting application on behalf of the individual referred to by him was processed and returned to the registered organisation concerned on 22 October 2013.

Human Trafficking

125. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the actions taken to deal with the exploitation of women and sex trafficking. [48443/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Over the past number of years

strong legislative, administrative and operational measures have been put in place to combat and prevent trafficking in human beings including for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008 provides for penalties of up to life imprisonment and, at the discretion of the court, a fine for persons who traffick or attempt to traffick other persons including for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It also makes it an offence to sell or offer for sale or to purchase or offer to purchase any person for any purpose. Penalties of up to life imprisonment and, at the discretion of the court, a fine apply in respect of these offences. Furthermore it is an offence for a person to solicit for prostitution a person who s/he knows or has reasonable grounds for believing is a trafficked person. The penalty can be up to five years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine on conviction on indictment.

A dedicated Anti-Human Trafficking Unit was established in my Department in 2008 with the purpose of ensuring that the State's response to human trafficking is coordinated and comprehensive. In addition to this dedicated Unit there are 3 other dedicated Units in State Agencies dealing with the issue namely:

- the Human Trafficking Investigation and Co-ordination Unit in An Garda Síochána;
- the Anti-Human Trafficking Team in the Health Service Executive; and
- a specialised Human Trafficking legal team in the Legal Aid Board.

Dedicated personnel are also assigned to deal with the prosecution of cases in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and staff in the New Communities and Asylum Seekers Unit in the Department of Social Protection facilitates victims moving into mainstream social services. There are also a wide range of training and awareness raising activities ongoing and extensive consultation structures exist with up to 70 State Agencies, Non- Governmental Organisations and International Organisations.

The State provides a wide range of support services to victims of human trafficking including those persons who have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. These services include accommodation, medical care and planning, psychological assistance, material assistance, legal aid and advice, vocational training and education. The Anti-Human Trafficking Team in the Health Service Executive develops individual comprehensive Care Plans for all persons who are potentially victims of human trafficking (including those who have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation) addressing all of the support services that are required. My Department also provides funding to Ruhama who work with predominately with female victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. A detailed Guide to the Procedures for supporting and protecting victims of human trafficking, along with other Guides and leaflets, are accessible on the dedicated anti-trafficking website www.blueblindfold.gov.ie.

The Government's approach to the issue of Human Trafficking (including the trafficking of women for the purpose of sexual exploitation) is set out in the National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Trafficking of Persons 2009-2012 which set out 144 Actions to address this issue. A copy of the National Action Plan and a Review of the Plan are available on the dedicated Anti-Trafficking site www.blueblindfold.gov.ie. A new National Action Plan to cover the period from 2013 to 2016 is currently being prepared. A process of consultation with other state agencies and civil society which will significantly inform the direction and content of the new National Action Plan. The prevention and detection of human trafficking and the protection of its victims has also been a policing priority for An Garda Síochána for the past number of years and it remains a priority in 2013.

126. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on suspicious cars driving around an area (details supplied) in Dublin 9 last week. [48480/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to the matter referred to by the Deputy. I will contact the Deputy directly as soon as the report is to hand.

Garda Vetting Applications

127. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when Garda vetting will be finalised in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48493/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that no vetting application has been received in respect of the person to whom the Deputy refers. In the circumstances, I can only suggest that the person contacts the registered organisation involved.

Road Traffic Legislation

128. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 1087 of 18 September 2013, if there has been any further progress in terms of resolving the technical and administrative measures required to commence section 44 of the Road Traffic Act 2010; and if he will further provide an up-to-date report on the work of the working group established earlier this year under the aegis of the Courts Service to examine various operational aspects of the penalty points system. [48504/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that the working group established earlier this year under the aegis of the Courts Service has met on a number of occasions and is due to report in the near future. I am further informed, by the Garda authorities, that the technical and administrative arrangements required to bring the provision in question into effect remain under careful evaluation.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission Investigations

129. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if it is always the policy of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission to ensure that investigators appointed to examine complaints regarding the conduct of members of An Garda Síochána are in no way linked either professionally or personally to the members being investigated; and if there is a register of interests for such investigators. [48505/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission requires the members of the Commission and all staff, on an annual basis, to submit a declaration in relation to any conflict of interest which may arise in the course of the performance of their functions or duties for inclusion in a Register of Interests. This declaration is separate from any declaration required under the provisions of Ethics in Public Office Act 1995. Where, during the course of the year covered by the declaration, a conflict of interest not previously declared arises, members and staff are requested to submit a revised declaration which should include details of the interest. The new Protocols agreed between the Garda

Commissioner and the Ombudsman Commissioners last September, which are available on the websites of both organisations, contain General Principles governing the appointment of Investigating Officers which are aimed at avoiding any conflict of interest which may prejudice the outcome of a case.

Personal Insolvency Act

130. **Deputy Ann Phelan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the qualifying criteria for persons whom the Personal Insolvency Act was designed to help; if he will consider a nine month review of the legislation enacted, to find out the number of persons that have engaged with the process; and the way the legislation is actually helping those who need it most. [48510/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The eligibility criteria for each of three debt resolution processes contained in the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 are set out in sections 26, 57 and 91. These are reasonable and proportionate and were extensively discussed during the Oireachtas debates. I believe that the provisions of the Act can be of great assistance to persons struggling with debt problems to reach agreed and sustainable solutions. It does require that all participants in the process fully commit to making it work. There must be no unrealistic expectations on any potential party to a debt resolution process.

The details of persons who have formally engaged with a process under the Act will be entered into the appropriate Registers required to be maintained by the Insolvency Service of Ireland. I understand that the Service also publishes from time to time details of the enquiries it receives from the public. The Act was signed into law by the President on 29 December 2012. Further refinements to the Act were made by the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013. The final remaining Part of the 2012 Act, concerning bankruptcy reform, is expected to be commenced later this month. There is provision for a review of the Personal Insolvency Act not later than 3 years after commencement of the new debt resolution processes. I believe that this is a reasonable period of time in which to allow us to consider developments and I have no plans to bring that date forward.

Personal Insolvency Act

131. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the exact date on which section 157 of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 will be commenced; the reason for the delay in the commencement of this Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48515/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Section 157 of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 concerns the introduction of a much shorter discharge period from bankruptcy of three years. I expect to be in a position to commence this section and the relevant Parts of the Personal Insolvency Act and, the further refinements to bankruptcy law contained in the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013, later this month. I am awaiting confirmation that the necessary and relevant Rules of the Superior Court in regard to bankruptcy have been made.

Garda Vetting Applications

132. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding an application for Garda vetting in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; if the application will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48533/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that it is not possible to check the status of the application referred to in the absence of the individual's date of birth. If the Deputy will provide the additional information, I will have further enquiries made in the matter.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission Investigations

133. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 540 to 545, inclusive, of 21 May 2013, if he will be recommending that the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission retains more detailed statistics of the kind of request in those questions when compiling data on complaints received by that office. [48535/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission informs me that GSOC's Case Management System, which is under constant internal review, provides GSOC with comprehensive data and statistics (as can be seen in its various statutory reports that can be found on its website www.gardaombudsman.ie). However, responses to very specific queries can involve compilation of data over many years that can be very resource intensive.

The Ombudsman Commission is however always happy to engage directly with any interested party in order to manage and progress any queries.

Garda Investigations

134. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the case of a person (details supplied). [48567/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the matter referred to by the Deputy relates to an ongoing civil dispute and that there is no criminal investigation ongoing in relation to this matter.

The Deputy will appreciate that I have no function in relation to the issue which he has raised.

Departmental Funding

135. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Defence if there is any funding opportunity within his Department for voluntary emergency response organisations such as search and rescue organisations that respond to call-outs in remote areas of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48423/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy may be aware my Department has responsibility for the management and development of Civil Defence at national level. Civil Defence is the principal statutory volunteer based organisation in Ireland with over 4,600 active volunteers who are based in each local authority area. The role of Civil Defence is to

provide second-line support to the frontline services in responding to emergencies across a wide range of disciplines such as Casualty/First-Aid, Rescue, Boating, Communications and Welfare in addition to providing community support activities. In the current year my Department provided a total of €4.243m in funding to Civil Defence to support the efforts of the volunteers in assisting with emergency response efforts nationwide.

The Irish Red Cross Society is an independent charitable body corporate whose volunteers provide Ambulance Services, Search and Rescue Services and a broad range of community based health, social care and youth programmes across the country.

My Department supports the valuable work carried out by the Society's volunteers through the provision of a grant in aid, which currently amounts to €739,000 per annum. This grant is provided as a contribution towards the salary and administration costs of running the Society's headquarters.

It is my intention, despite the current economic climate, to maintain that level of funding to both organisations to support their emergency response efforts.

Grant Payments

136. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding payments in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48394/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a Single Farm Payment/Disadvantaged Areas' Scheme application on 12 March 2013. EU Regulations governing the administration of the schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases on farm inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a ground eligibility/cross compliance inspection. This inspection identified discrepancies between the area declared and the area found, resulting in an over-declaration in area of between 3% and 20%. Based on the Terms and Conditions of the schemes, this results in the 2013 payments being based on the found area having being reduced by double the difference between the area found and the area claimed.

The person named was notified of this decision on 4 November 2013. The person named was also informed of the right to seek a review of this decision. In the event that the person named is dissatisfied with the outcome of the review, the decision can be appealed to the Independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within 3 months.

Payments due under the 2013 Single Payment Scheme and Disadvantaged Areas' Scheme were finalised and issued directly to the nominated bank account of person named on 7 October and 8 October 2013, respectively.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

137. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the results of an inspection in relation to disadvantaged areas payment and single farm payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48398/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted an application under the 2013 Single Payment and Disadvantaged Area Schemes on 16th April 2013. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases, land eligibility inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

In order to meet the EU requirements, the application concerned was one of a number which was selected for inspection. The application was initially examined via remote sensing (Satellite Inspection). As over claims were determined on some parcels, these were sent for ground inspection. The ground inspection has now been carried out and the results are being finalised with the intention of issuing any payment due as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will shortly be in contact with the person named.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

138. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding repayments to his Department in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48403/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The holding of the person named was subject to a Cross Compliance inspection under the Single Payment Scheme on 15 November 2011.

This inspection uncovered breaches relating to Nitrates regulation requirements, specifically the failure to minimise the creation of soiled water, the inadequate collection of farmyard manure and the inadequate management of storage facilities for farmyard manure, resulting in a 5% penalty being recorded against the 2011 Direct Payments.

The person named appealed this decision and was notified of the outcome of the review, which was to uphold the original inspection decision, on 15 June 2012. The person named was also advised that of the right to appeal the outcome of the review to the Independent Agriculture Appeals Office within 3 months of the date of the review letter. My Department understands that no such appeal has been lodged.

As part of the original inspection process the person named was requested to submit to the Department specific records, as required under the Nitrates regulations, within 2 weeks of the date of inspection.

The analysis of these records firstly indicated that the records were submitted after the deadline and secondly that there was insufficient storage capacity on the holding of the person named for the volume of organic fertiliser/livestock manure being generated. As a result the original 5% penalty was increased to 20% penalty. The person named was informed of this decision on 29 August 2013.

The person named has appealed the penalty decision and this request for a review is currently being examined. The person named will be notified of the outcome as soon as possible. In the event that the person named is dissatisfied with the outcome of the review, the decision can be appealed to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office within 3 months.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

139. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when pay-

ment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48426/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As processing of the application of the person named has recently been finalised, payment will issue shortly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Fish Quotas

140. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture; Food and the Marine if he will ensure that Ireland's fishermen will not lose out to Iceland and the Faroes in terms of the proposed increase in mackerel stocks from 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48437/13]

155. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture; Food and the Marine if the proposed increase in mackerel quota of 300,000 tonnes will be allocated to EU countries or countries outside of the EU. [48564/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 140 and 155 together.

The overall Total Allowable Catch (TAC) advice from ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea) for North East Atlantic mackerel 2013 was 542,000 tonnes. The advice for 2014 is that landings should be no more than 889,886 tonnes.

As the Deputies will be aware, mackerel is Ireland's most important fishery, and the long running situation whereby both Iceland and the Faeroes have been engaged in unacceptable and irresponsible fishing of this stock has been, and is, a matter of deep concern to me. My approach as Minister has always been to engage in the negotiations between the EU and the other Coastal States (Iceland, Faeroes & Norway) with a view to protecting Ireland's interests while at the same time being prepared to go some way towards meeting the expectations of Iceland and the Faeroes.

In this regard, I have placed this issue on the agenda of the Council of Fisheries Ministers on numerous occasions, most recently at the meeting held on 17 October. In advance of that meeting, I also held bilateral meetings with Commissioner Damanaki, Spanish Fisheries Minister Canete, UK Minister Eustice and Scottish Minister Lohead to press Ireland's case. At the Council meeting, I sought information from the Commission (who negotiate on behalf of the EU at the Coastal States meetings) on the current state of play in the negotiations and, in particular, details on the Commissions' discussion with Norway, a key partner for the EU on this issue.

I have consistently argued that any new offer to Iceland must be jointly agreed with Norway on the basis of equal burden sharing, that Iceland should not be granted access to EU waters as a part of any deal and that any deal must also protect the interests of EU Member States like Ireland who have relied on this fishery for over 40 years. I have always made it clear, however, that I was not opposed to a deal and recognized that Iceland (and Faeroes) should be provided with fair and justifiable quota shares.

In this regard, I asked that the Commissioner and my fellow Ministers give serious consideration to a proposal developed by the European Pelagic Industry that would involve a tiered approach with different percentage shares for each of the Coastal States depending upon the level of the Total Allowable Catch advice from year to year. The core concept behind this proposal

is to protect those fleets that have developed and now depend upon the mackerel fishery over a long number of years.

I was pleased that the Commissioner and many of the Member States took away this concept for more detailed examination in advance of the Coastal State negotiations in London on 22 October, and with the positive consideration of all of the points raised by me.

At the negotiations in London on 23/24 October, in addition to my officials, Ireland was also represented at industry level. Unfortunately however, there was little by way of concrete progress. In large part this was due to the fact that a new Norwegian Fisheries Minister had only been appointed the previous week. One positive aspect was that, again at Ireland's instigation, there was a detailed presentation to, and exchange of views with Member States, from the European Pelagic industry on their proposal.

Another round of Coastal State negotiations is now due to take place in Clonakilty from 18-22 November. Ireland will play a constructive role at those negotiations and will leave no stone unturned in an effort to reach a solution that is balanced and fair to all of the parties.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

141. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a disadvantaged areas aid application will be cleared for payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48448/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named is one of a number of applicants under the 2012 and 2013 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, whose cases were impacted upon by the requirement to have achieved a minimum stocking density of 0.3 livestock units per forage hectare in 2011. The person named failed to meet the Terms and Conditions of the scheme in 2011, and therefore cannot be considered under Disadvantaged Areas Scheme for subsequent years.

Animal Diseases Issues

142. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the death of a dog from the Longford pound due to go to a new home in the UK which was vaccinated for rabies and which, according to the vet, died as a result of a complication from the rabies vaccine; if he will clarify the need for the introduction of a rabies vaccination process for animals being exported to the UK when the UK has been rabies free since 1902; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48457/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am not aware of this particular case referred to by the Deputy which would be a matter between the private veterinary surgeon and the client. On a general note, the use of rabies vaccine is widespread throughout the world and such vaccines are considered to be safe. As with all medicines any supposed negative effects arising from their use should be reported to the manufacturer.

EU law relating to the protection of citizens from rabies provides that dogs, cats and ferrets moving between EU Member States must be accompanied by EU Pet Passports certifying microchip identification and rabies vaccination, with some additional requirements for commercial exports. This system allows dog owners to bring their pets into and out of Ireland without a compulsory and lengthy quarantine. These requirements also apply to trade between Ireland

and the UK.

In view of this, any person travelling with dogs to Britain is being advised by my Department to ensure that they are compliant with EU law.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

143. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Kerry has not yet received their area aid or single farm payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48477/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a Single Farm Payment/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application on 18 April 2013. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases on-farm inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a ground eligibility/cross compliance inspection. This inspection has been completed and the results are now being finalised with the intention of issuing any payment due as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will shortly be in contact with the person named.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

144. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Kerry has not yet received their area aid or single farm payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48479/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a Single Farm Payment/Disadvantaged Areas' Scheme application on 10 May 2013. EU Regulations governing the administration of the schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases on farm inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a ground eligibility inspection. This inspection identified discrepancies between the area declared and the area found, resulting in an over-declaration in area of between 3% and 20%. Based on the Terms and Conditions of the schemes, this results in the 2013 payments being based on the found area having being reduced by double the difference between the area found and the area claimed.

The person named was notified of this decision on 11 November 2013. The person named was also informed of the right to seek a review of this decision. In the event that the person named is dissatisfied with the outcome of the review, the decision can be appealed to the Independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within 3 months.

Processing of payments under the 2013 Single Payment Scheme and Disadvantaged Areas' Scheme have recently been finalised and will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of person named.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

145. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding single farm payment and area aid payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; if he will expedite the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48511/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a Single Farm Payment/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application on 19 April 2013. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases on-farm inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a ground eligibility/cross compliance inspection. This inspection has been completed and the results are now being finalised with the intention of issuing any payment due as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise of officials in my Department will shortly be in contact with the person named.

Animal Breeding Regulations

146. **Deputy Ann Phelan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the request from the Irish Draught Horse Society to seek the licence for the studbook of the Irish draught horse (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48522/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware of the recommendation of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The Department has recently considered an application to maintain a studbook for the Irish Draught horse breed from the Irish Draught Horse Society Ltd. This application has been refused as my Department is satisfied that approval of a second Studbook would dilute the genetic pool of elite breeding stock and dissipate the scarce available resources to promote the breed's future development.

Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) is currently approved by my Department under the relevant legislation to maintain the Irish Draught Horse Studbook. HSI has been proactive in ensuring the breeding objectives and the breeding programme for the breed are appropriate, having already taken on board the views of breeders.

In 2008, HSI appointed a Task Force to advise on the appropriate breeding strategy for the Irish Draught Horse. The Task Force included representatives of Irish Draught breeders which were chosen by HSI for their knowledge of Irish Draught breeding and relevant organizations were also invited to contribute. The review included lengthy consultation with all involved in the industry and the Irish Draught Breeding Policy was published in 2010.

This year, Horse Sport Ireland has initiating a further review of its Irish Draught breeding policy in order to determine the effectiveness of the current policy and to make any amendments to the breeding programme which would be in the best interest of the breed. To assist this process, I understand that an Irish Draught Breeding Policy Review Taskforce is reviewing matters such as the breeding objective for the Studbook, the classification system, the inspection system and suggestions for studbook initiatives to improve the quality and marketing of the breed.

This forum is providing a significant opportunity for organizations like the Irish Draught Horse Society to offer its views and advice on future policies and strategies to preserve the

breed. The Task Force is the appropriate forum to raise views regarding the adequacy of present policies towards the preservation of the breed. This Taskforce has held one meeting in October 2013 and a second meeting is being held in the next few days. I understand the Society was invited to be involved in this process.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

147. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding area aid payments for 2012 and 2013 in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; if he will expedite the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48529/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payment under the 2012 and 2013 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme has not yet issued to the person named as the holding has not yet satisfied the Scheme minimum stocking density requirements. As soon as the holding concerned is confirmed as having met these requirements, the case will be further processed with a view to payment at the earliest possible date thereafter.

Trade Agreements

148. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the standards which will be applied to Canadian beef and pork imports to Ireland as a result of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement signed between the EU and Canada last month. [48557/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the EU/Canada Trade agreement initialled last month by President Barroso and the Canadian Prime Minister, Canada was awarded a tariff rate quota for beef of 50,000 tonnes carcass weight equivalent. This equates to a quota of 39,000 tonnes of boneless beef. The quota is split between fresh/chilled beef comprising 31,000 tonnes, plus the existing 4,000 tonnes quota as part of the Hormones Agreement, and frozen beef comprising 15,000 tonnes. As regards pigmeat, Canada was awarded a quota of 75,000 tonnes.

The agreement has yet to be endorsed by the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. Moreover, certain matters, including details of the management of tariff rate quotas, have still to be finalised. However, I can tell you that under EU veterinary legislation the principle of equivalence will apply. This means that all imports of beef and pigmeat into the EU must be produced to standards equivalent to those applicable in the EU and in plants that are approved by the EU Commission. The regime is monitored by the EU Food and Veterinary Office.

In practical terms, any imports of beef and pigmeat from Canada will be accompanied by veterinary certificates issued by the Canadian authorities which will, inter alia, certify origin and that the animals have not been treated with hormones.

Trade Agreements

149. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the actions he is taking to prevent the same market access concessions as were given to Canada in the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement being made available to the United States

during its current negotiations of a trade deal with the EU. [48558/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the EU/Canada Trade agreement initialled last month by President Barroso and the Canadian Prime Minister, Canada was awarded a tariff rate quota for beef of 50,000 tonnes carcass weight equivalent. This equates to a quota of 39,000 tonnes of boneless beef. The quota is split between fresh/chilled beef comprising 31,000 tonnes, plus the existing 4,000 tonnes quota as part of the Hormones Agreement, and frozen beef comprising 15,000 tonnes. As regards pigmeat, Canada was awarded a quota of 75,000 tonnes.

I have been in regular contact with Commissioner Ciolos concerning this agreement and I have made it clear to the Commission that it should not act as a precursor to the EU – US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. The Taoiseach has also raised this issue with President Barroso.

Milk Quota Trading Scheme

150. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume of milk quota being offered, and being sought, by Irish farmers in circumstances where the State has exceeded its quota six months before the quota year ends. [48559/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): On 30 August 2013 I announced details of the fifteenth Milk Quota Trading Scheme which is the first of two Trading Schemes to allocate quota in respect of the 2014/2015 milk quota year. The closing date for receipt of applications to this stage was 11 October last.

I am informed that preliminary output reports indicate that 256 applications were received in the Department by that deadline, offering approximately 30 million litres of quota for sale, while 2,113 applications were received requesting approximately 140 million litres. I expect to be in a position to announce the results of this element of the scheme in early December.

I also expect to announce details of the second stage of the 2014-2015 Trading Scheme before end-December 2013. This stage, which will be the final opportunity to buy or sell quota through the Milk Quota Trading Scheme, will have a closing date of 31 January 2014.

Horse Racing Industry Development

151. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide in tabular form, on an annual basis for the past five years, the value of exports of thoroughbred horses and the number of horses being exported. [48560/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The following figures are taken from Horse Racing Ireland Factbooks 2008-2012

Year	Number of Irish foaled thoroughbred horses exported	Number of Irish foaled exported thoroughbred horses sold through auction*	Value of Irish foaled exported thoroughbred horses sold through auction*€
2012	4,837	3,497	174,338,505
2011	4,987	3,640	156,493,083
2010	5,181	3,803	146,947,956
2009	5,315	4,195	174,405,744
2008	5,016	4,195	182,449,256

*excludes private sales

Fish Quotas

152. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the sentinel herring quota for small vessels in the Dunmore box will be lost if the quota is not fulfilled in the period specified in 2013. [48561/13]

153. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the sentinel herring quota for small vessels in the Dunmore box is not fulfilled before 27 December 2013 he will allow a period in January 2014 for the quota to be fulfilled. [48562/13]

154. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the sentinel herring quota for small vessels in the Dunmore box is not fulfilled in 2013, that it will not be reduced in 2014. [48563/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 152 to 154, inclusive, together.

The position in relation to the management of all fisheries, both pelagic and whitefish, is that the quota is managed on a single year basis and under fishing by any group of vessels is not carried forward to the following year for that group. For all stocks, any carry over from 2013, which can be up to 10% in the case of Celtic Sea Herring, will be added to the national adjusted quota for 2014. Under current policy, the Celtic Sea Herring sentinel fishery will receive up to 11% of the adjusted quota, each year.

Question No. 155 answered with Question No. 140.

Fish Quotas

156. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the situation whereby Dutch factory vessels in Irish waters remain at sea for an entire year with half the mackerel quota that Irish vessels have, while Irish vessels may remain at sea for only half a year, due to lack of quota. [48565/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Each Member States fishing opportunities are set down for each year in the annual EU Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and quotas Regulation. Quotas are based on share allocations which were established when EU management arrangements, in terms of TACs and quotas, were put in place for the first time for the particular stock. It is a matter for each Member State to determine how its fishing opportunities are made available to its fleet. It is the responsibility of the control authorities, the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and the Naval Service in Ireland to control the activities of fishing vessels in Ireland's Exclusive Fisheries Zone (200 mile zone). Operational issues in relation to sea fisheries control are a matter for the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA).

School Absenteeism

157. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in view of the

fact that 30% of students in disadvantaged schools that have missed 20 days or more of school in 2010-11, to explain her plans to reduce the absenteeism figure; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48527/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), which operates under the aegis of my Department, has a statutory remit to encourage and support regular school attendance. The NEWB monitors school attendance nationally and I recently launched the Analysis of School Attendance Data for the 2010/2011 school year. These data show a continued improvement in student attendance from 2009/2010 and previous years. The number of school days being missed is at the lowest for the five year period 2006/07-2010/11 and the continued positive trend over recent years is to be welcomed.

While every incremental improvement represents real progress the number of children who miss school each day remains a significant cause for concern. The report highlights the need for sustained and focussed approaches to supporting student attendance, especially within particular groups in society. In the case of schools serving disadvantaged areas, the data shows that absences over 20 days in these schools are down 1% on the previous year's figures (2009/10) and 3% from 2008/09. The overall improvements in attendance data in general demonstrate the positive impact of targeted investment programmes and the progress that can be achieved through the collaborative efforts of schools, parents, statutory and support services.

Within the NEWB, the Education Welfare Service has specific responsibility for the Board's general statutory function to ensure that each child attends a recognised school or otherwise receives a certain minimum education. I am advised by the NEWB that the Education Welfare Service worked with over 20,000 children in 2012, of which 2,420 were intensive interventions which required sustained support from an Education Welfare Officer and a multidisciplinary approach, in collaboration with schools, families and other services, in order to address the issues underlying poor school attendance.

The NEWB is also developing guidelines for schools on the development of school attendance strategies. The guidance will provide practical advice to schools in their task of enabling children to maximise their attendance, participation and retention in schools. The Board intends to complete this work within the current academic year.

The Department of Education and Skills DEIS school support programme (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) is part of a continuum of interventions designed to address the needs of 3 to 18 year olds from disadvantaged communities. DEIS adopts an integrated approach with early intervention as a core principle. Designated DEIS schools are supported in developing school based plans to facilitate self-evaluation against a range of self-determined targets, including the setting of targets on school attendance as a prioritised area of activity. My Department works closely with the Department of Education and Skills to ensure that a coherent and consistent approach is taken to effectively target our respective resources to support children at risk of poor school attendance and early school leaving. In relation to DEIS schools, the NEWB is in the process of refining and implementing a new strategic approach to service delivery through the integrated working of its three service strands, namely; the Education Welfare Service (74 front-line Education Welfare staff); Home School Community Liaison Programme (comprised of 402 school-based co-ordinators); and School Completion Programme (comprised of 124 school cluster projects involving 470 primary and 224 post-primary schools). This integrated model of service will provide an enhanced response to the needs of children, families and schools in relation to attendance, participation and retention. I see this strategic national approach as a crucial reform in our efforts to tackle school absenteeism.

The amalgamation of the NEWB's services into the new Child and Family Agency upon its establishment will further consolidate the development of services aimed at children and provide opportunities for more effective working amongst the range of professionals involved in such services. The Child and Family Agency will have a specific legislative remit to promote educational outcomes through its educational welfare programmes. In the case of schools servicing disadvantaged areas, work to improve outcomes in school attendance will be a collaborative venture involving the existing three service strands, schools themselves, parents and young people, other Departments, agencies and services.

Youth Justice Strategy

158. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when she intends to publish a successor strategy to the National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-10; the reason no successor strategy has been published to date; her assessment of the impact of the 2008-10 strategy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48467/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Since 1 January 2012 the Irish Youth Justice Service has been based in my Department and operates across two Departments, my Department and the Department of Justice and Equality and is staffed by officials from both Departments.

The main legislation covering youth justice is the Children Act, 2001. Responsibility for the Children Act, 2001 is shared between the Minister for Justice and Equality and myself with:

- The Minister for Justice and Equality being responsible for most of the Act which includes youth crime policy and law, including crime prevention, crime reduction, criminal proceedings, diversion and community sanctions (including community projects). Minister Shatter is also responsible for dealing with An Garda Síochána and the Probation Service as well as responsibility, via the Irish Prison Service, for young people in St. Patrick's Institution.

- I am responsible for the 3 Children Detention Schools at Oberstown, Lusk, Co. Dublin which provide detention places to the Courts for girls up to the age of 18 years and boys up to the age of 17 years ordered to be remanded or committed on criminal charges. I am also responsible for the child care aspects of the Children Act, 2001.

The National Youth Justice Oversight Group completed its draft "Report on the Implementation of the National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010" in April, 2012 and it was presented to the Senior Officials Group on Social Policy on 13 June, 2012 and to the Cabinet Sub Committee on Social Policy on 1 October, 2012. The report is available on the IYJS website www.iyjs.ie.

The Irish Youth Justice Service in my Department is currently finalising its Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018 which will sit within the *Children and Young People's Policy Framework (CYPPF) 2014-2018* currently being developed in my Department but will also form part of the *National Anti-Crime Strategy* being developed as part of the draft White Paper on Crime process being finalised by my colleague Minister Shatter.

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

ventions.

The drafting and publication of the plan has been a collaborative effort between my Department and the Department of Justice and Equality. I believe this collaborative approach provides a solid platform to achieve our shared objectives and I intend to publish the Action Plan in conjunction with Minister Shatter in the very near future.

Child Care Proceedings

159. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in view of the published findings of the interim report of the child care law reporting project, if she will be introducing detailed legislative guidelines on the role and functions of guardians ad litem; if it is proposed that such guidelines would be reflective of the guidelines developed in May 2009 by the former Childrens Acts advisory board entitled, Giving a Voice to Children's Wishes, Feelings and Interests: Guidance on the Role, Criteria for Appointment, Qualifications and Training of Guardians ad Litem Appointed for Children in Proceedings under the Child Care Act 1991, as there is anecdotal evidence that many guardians follow these guidelines in their current practice. [48499/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will be aware that the appointment of a guardian *ad litem* (GAL) in child care cases is a matter for the Courts. Under section 26 of the Child Care Act 1991, the Court may appoint a guardian *ad litem* to a child who is the subject of care proceedings, if it is satisfied that it is necessary in the interests of the child and in the interests of justice to do so. They are always appointed where a child is subject to Special Care proceedings.

I believe that there is considerable scope to improve the quality, consistency and cost effectiveness of the current service which has evolved in an ad hoc manner over a number of years. I also believe that a much more regularised structure for guardian *ad litem* services needs to be developed if the role of the GAL is to deliver real value.

Officials within my Department are working closely with the Department of Justice and Equality and the HSE with a view to establishing the most appropriate arrangements for the future organisation and delivery of this service.

Child Care Proceedings

160. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of expenditure incurred to pay guardians ad litem in the years 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; and if she will provide a breakdown by the Health Service Executive area of the number of guardians ad litem who received funding or expenses from the Health Service Executive in those years. [48500/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have requested the information from the HSE and I will revert to the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Mental Health Services Provision

161. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health in regard to the 477 multidisciplinary staff for community mental health services promised for 2013, the number

that are currently in post; if all of the 477 staff for 2013 will be hired in 2013; if he will provide a breakdown of the 477 staff for 2013 by discipline and by region; if he will provide a breakdown of the 477 staff in terms of the allocation to adult mental health services, CAMHS, intellectual disability, old age and forensic services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48390/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): An additional €35m was allocated in Budget 2013 for the continued development of our mental health services across a range of headings, including the further development of forensic services and community mental health teams for adults, children, older persons and mental health intellectual disability. 477 posts have been approved to implement these measures.

As at 30th September 255 posts (54%) were in the final stages of recruitment, and a further 149 (31%) were at earlier stages indicating that 85% of the posts are in the recruitment process with the balance in the HR approvals process.

There are a number of posts for which there are difficulties in identifying suitable candidates due to factors including availability of qualified candidates and geographic location. The HSE's National Recruitment Service is currently working to ensure that the remaining posts will be filled as soon as possible, from existing panels or through competition in the absence of panels, at the earliest opportunity. Options to enable more local recruitment are also being considered where this will assist in filling specific posts. I have received assurances from the HSE that the recruitment process for these new posts is being given priority within the HSE.

In relation to the specific breakdown by discipline and by region, since recruitment and allocation to posts and specific areas of service is currently underway this question would be more appropriately addressed by the HSE to whom it has been referred for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

European Health Insurance Card Issues

162. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 1142 of 5 November 2013, the amount that is currently owed to Ireland by other EU states under the EHIC scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48395/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As I indicated in my reply of 5 November, 2013, the HSE is currently working on systems to capture EHIC costs so as to enable it to commence the issuing of claims for reimbursement of costs to the relevant competent states in the near future. As this work is still in progress it is not possible to say at this stage the amounts Ireland is owed by other EU states under the EHIC scheme.

Medical Card Eligibility

163. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) in Dublin 12 is not eligible to receive a medical card. [48396/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Medical Card Reviews

164. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a medical card review application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48397/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

State Properties

165. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Health the maintenance costs associated with the upkeep of the former Grove Hospital property at Tuam, County Galway since it was purchased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48399/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Management of the health care property portfolio is a service matter. Therefore your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Card Reviews

166. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when persons (details supplied) in County Carlow will receive an answer to the review of their medical card; and if he will expedite an answer. [48400/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Medical Card Applications

167. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when persons (details supplied) in County Carlow will receive an answer to their medical card application; and if he will expedite an answer. [48401/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Medical Card Reviews

168. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Carlow will receive an answer on their medical card review; and if he will expedite an answer. [48402/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

169. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the changes the special delivery unit has brought to the accident and emergency department in Beaumont Hospital to date; the future plans of the SDU for the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48428/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

170. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Health if he will arrange for an urgent surgical procedure to be carried out in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48435/13]

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 been adopted by the Health Service Executive, 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 HSE to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Medical Card Applications

171. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card will issue in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48442/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Hospital Charges

172. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health if he will reduce the accident and emergency charge for self-presenters to urgent care centres in view of the need to encourage the public to attend an urgent care centre thereby taking the pressure off overburdened accident and emergency departments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48463/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The A&E charge which is currently €100, is provided for by the Health (Out-Patient Charges) Regulations 2013. The charge applies to persons attending Emergency Departments, Accident and Emergency Departments, Casualty Departments, Minor Injury Units, Urgent Care Centres, Local Injury Units or any other facility providing similar services, subject to exemptions set out in these regulations, including medical card holders and those who have a letter of referral from a registered medical practitioner.

I have no plans to reduce these charges for those attending Urgent Care Centres.

Medical Card Reviews

173. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health the reason the Health Service Executive cancelled a medical card when it is valid until December 2013 and due for renewal on 31 December 2013; if the HSE will refund the €143 medication bill in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48464/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Medical Card Applications

174. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Health when an assessment will be completed on a medical card application in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Galway;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48468/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Medical Card Applications

175. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will issue on a medical card application in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48476/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Medical Card Applications

176. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick. [48481/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Nursing Home Subventions

177. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Health if there are any plans to develop a national forum for discussions to take place between the National Treatment Purchase Fund and the national representative body for nursing homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48490/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 674 of 28 May 2013.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Applications

178. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients on the waiting list to be admitted to nursing homes who are seeking to avail of the fair deal scheme; and the number of patients who are currently in hospital wards across the country and who are waiting to be accommodated in nursing homes. [48501/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The total budget for long-term residential care in 2013 in €974m. The HSE operates a national placement list to enable it to operate within the budget for the Nursing Homes Support Scheme. All applicants who are approved for funding are put on the placement list in chronological order by the date of determination of their application. Funding issues to applicants in this chronological order to ensure equity nationally. The HSE makes every effort to match available funding to demand by releasing funding on a weekly basis. According to the latest figures available from the HSE dated end September 2013, there were 523 people on the placement list with an average waiting time of 25 days.

As the issues raised by the Deputy are service matters, they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

179. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide information regarding the categories of persons based on clinical assessment with the orthodontist on the orthodontic treatment waiting list; the basis for the different categories such as 4d, 5i, 4f, 4c, and all other categories; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48517/13]

180. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the orthodontic treatment waiting list, on a county basis; the number of these persons that applied for treatment in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and earlier years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48518/13]

189. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the degree to which orthodontic treatment requirements identified in the course of school medical examinations has been provided by way of follow-up; the waiting lists for such treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48547/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 179, 180 and 189 together.

The HSE provides orthodontic treatment to those who have been assessed and referred for treatment before their 16th birthday. Orthodontic referrals are generally received via the Public Dental Service school screening programme. An individual's access to orthodontic treatment is determined in accordance with the Modified Index of Treatment Need. The dental health component has five categories ranging from 1 (no need for treatment) to 5 (great need). Further sub-divisions of these categories are substantially based in accordance with the causes of mal-occlusion, e.g. misalignment of teeth. Patients with the greatest level of need are provided with treatment.

At the time of assessment those with urgent clinical need are prioritised. It should be noted that the nature of orthodontic care means that immediate treatment is not always desirable. It is estimated that in up to 5% of cases it is necessary to wait for further growth to take place before

treatment commences. Information on waiting times is collated by the HSE by region and for the intervals as shown in the table only. The most recent information relates to the third quarter of 2013.

Waiting time from assessment to commencement of treatment	1-6 months	7-12 months	13-24 months	2-3 years	Over 4 years	TOTAL
HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster	862	746	959	724	16	3,307
HSE West	566	1135	1165	1200	61	4,127
HSE South	326	963	495	1190	191	3,165
HSE Dublin North East	341	631	864	1235	194	3,265
TOTAL	2,095	3,475	3,483	4,349	462	13,864

Health Services Provision

181. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ensure reductions to the Health Service Executive service plan budget will not affect or delay patients receiving chemotherapy for bowel and pancreatic cancer in several Dublin hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48528/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The quality and safety of our health services, including cancer services, has been a focus over the past number of years and this will continue in 2014 in the context of the HSE Service Plan for 2014. I wrote to the HSE on Thursday 31 October to confirm that the Executive has until 15 November to submit its Service Plan. In that letter, I also conveyed to the Executive that my overriding priority is patient safety, with the next priority being to treat patients in as timely a fashion as possible. A key priority for 2014 will be to further support the eight designated cancer centres, within available resources, to maintain continued improvements in diagnosis, surgery and multi-disciplinary care.

I welcome the huge improvements that have been made in recent years, led by the HSE National Cancer Control Programme. It is very encouraging to note that five year relative survival for all cancers is rising and is now 56.4% for people diagnosed between 2003-2007, as compared with 49.6% for people diagnosed in 1998-2002. Clearly 2014 will be a very challenging year for the health services. In meeting this challenge, the goal, wherever possible, is to cut the cost of services rather than the level or quality of the services delivered, and to accelerate the pace of reform. The reform programme for hospitals, as set out in *Future Health*, aims to deliver more responsive and equitable access to services for all patients; to organise public hospitals into more efficient and accountable hospital groups, which can deliver better patient care for less cost; and to ensure that smaller hospitals continue to play a key role.

EU Directives

182. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when the EU new cross border directive will be implemented; the amount of funding provided to initiate same; the expected health care benefits to the Irish consumer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48532/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The EU Directive on Patients' Rights in Cross Border Healthcare provides rules for the reimbursement to patients' of the cost of receiving

treatment abroad, where the patient would be entitled to such treatment in their home Member State (Member State of Affiliation) and supplements the rights that patients already have at EU level through the legislation on the coordination of social security schemes (regulation 883/04).

The Directive seeks to ensure a clear and transparent framework for the provision of cross-border healthcare within the EU, for those occasions where the care patients seek is provided in another Member State rather than in their home country. However, it should be emphasised that the vast majority of EU patients receive healthcare in their own country and prefer to do so.

The Department of Health is continuing to work on the necessary statutory provisions to fully implement the Directive and draft legal provisions to put in place the statutory provisions for this Directive are being prepared and will be implemented as soon as possible. Nevertheless, there are administrative arrangements in place in respect of the key provision of the Directive in relation to a national contact point (NCP), which has been set up within the HSE. The email address is crossborderdirective@hse.ie.

The principle function of the NCP is to facilitate exchange of information for patients concerning their rights and entitlements relating to receiving healthcare in another Member State, in particular the terms and conditions for reimbursement of cost, the procedures for accessing and determining those entitlements. The NCP also has a responsibility to ensure that all enquirers are informed of the rights, if any, that they may have through the legislation on the coordination of social security schemes (regulation 883/04) and which may be more beneficial to them. Patients requiring information on Ireland's implementation of the Directive may access NCP information on the Cross Border Directive (CBD) through the HSE's main website.

Departmental Expenditure

183. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied that the budget for his Department for 2014 is adequate to meet requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48541/13]

184. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which, within his Department, it has been found possible to identify areas most likely to be affected by expenditure overruns having particular regard to previous experience; if any attempt has been made to identify such areas early in the financial year with a view to ensuring continuity of service throughout the entire year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48542/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 183 and 184 together.

The gross current budget for the Department of Health (Vote 38) for 2014 is almost €212m, a reduction of €20m on the 2013 allocation of €232m. This funding is for the salaries and expenses of the Office of the Minister for Health and certain other services administered by that Office, including grants to research, consultative and advisory bodies. Clearly the budgetary restraints will prove challenging in 2014; however, with astute financial planning and management, I am confident that my Office will operate within budget and I do not anticipate any expenditure overruns on the Vote.

Medical Card Eligibility

185. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if particular steps have

been taken to ensure that those with specific or severe health needs or conditions are allowed to maintain their medical cards notwithstanding the budgetary situation he inherited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48543/13]

190. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the steps he has taken to ensure that medical cards are not arbitrarily withdrawn from persons with severe terminal illness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48548/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 185 and 190 together.

Under Section 45 of the Health Act 1970, as amended, persons who are unable, without due hardship, to arrange a general practitioner service for themselves or their family qualify for a medical card. There is no automatic entitlement to a medical card for persons with a specific illness or disability.

Under this legislation, the determination of eligibility for a medical card is the responsibility of the Health Service Executive. Section 45 requires the HSE to have regard to a person's, and their spouse or partner's overall financial situation in view of their reasonable expenditure. The HSE gives effect to this legislation and Government policy through its Medical Card National Assessment Guidelines.

Where a person's income is in excess of the income thresholds set out in the National Assessment Guidelines, the HSE uses its discretion to grant a medical card to a person who is unable, due to undue hardship, to arrange a GP service. In doing so, the HSE is obliged to have regard to the financial situation and expenditure of the individual and his or her dependents.

Since the beginning of 2011, the Government has taken measures and provided funding to ensure that an additional quarter of a million people have a medical card. Over 40% of the population now hold a medical card, which is the highest proportion since records began.

The HSE has an effective system in place for the provision of emergency medical cards for patients who are terminally ill in palliative care, or who are seriously ill and in urgent need of medical care that they cannot afford. They are issued within twenty-four hours of receipt of the required patient details and the letter of confirmation of the condition from a doctor or a medical consultant. With the exception of terminally ill patients in palliative care, the HSE issues all emergency cards on the basis that the patient is eligible for a medical card on the basis of means or undue hardship, and that the applicant will follow up with a full application within a number of weeks of receiving the emergency card. As a result, emergency medical cards are issued to a named individual, with a limited eligibility period of six months.

For persons with a terminal illness in palliative care, no means test applies. Once the terminal illness is verified, patients are given an emergency medical card for six months. Given the nature and urgency of the issue, the HSE has appropriate escalation routes to ensure that the person gets the card as quickly as possible.

Renewal assessment forms automatically issue to the holders of all medical card or GP visit cards, three months prior to the expiry date of the card.

Health Insurance Data

186. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if any particular study has been done into the increases in private health insurance over the past number of years in view of

the fact that increased competition in the area was supposed to benefit the consumer inherited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48544/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Health Insurance Authority, the independent statutory regulator of the private health insurance market in Ireland, provides advice to my Department on an ongoing basis. The data available on the private health insurance market in recent years shows a number of factors which are affecting private health insurance costs. The reduction in the numbers holding private health insurance, the age profile of those holding private health insurance, increases in claims costs, increases in premiums, and the overall state of the economy are all having an impact on the private health insurance market and its sustainability.

I am determined to address rising costs in the private health insurance sector in the interests of consumers. I want insurers to address their base costs, and have made it clear to insurers that I believe significant savings can be made, ultimately reducing the impact of rising health costs on health insurance premiums for the consumer. Last year I established the Consultative Forum on Health Insurance, comprising representatives from the private health insurance companies, my Department, and the Health Insurance Authority, to generate ideas to address health insurance costs. I appointed an independent Chairperson Mr. Pat McLoughlin who is working with my Department and the insurers under the auspices of the Forum on a review process to give effect to real cost reductions in the private health insurance market and I expect to receive his initial report shortly.

While competition is evident in the Irish private health insurance market, insurers have concentrated on competing for younger lives. Competition in a community rated health insurance system needs to be supported by risk equalisation, a mechanism to distribute fairly some of the differences that arise in insurers' costs due to the differing health status of all their customers. There has been a history of challenges to risk equalisation in Ireland, with the original risk equalisation scheme struck down in 2008. A temporary scheme was introduced in 2009, which I greatly improved in 2012 and I also put in place a permanent scheme of risk equalisation for the first time in 2013. There is a need to continue developing risk equalisation in order to protect the health insurance market and to ensure competition is on the basis of service and quality, not risk profile and I encourage insurers to compete actively to insure all lives.

Health Insurance Regulation

187. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if, in the context of private health insurance, efforts have been made to encourage all insurers to take on a cross-section of the age cohort thereby preventing advantageous trading by any insurer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48545/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am conscious of the need to ensure that there is a fair and balanced private health insurance market in Ireland. The Health Insurance Acts 1994 to 2012 provide the statutory basis for the regulation of the health insurance market in the interest of the common good. At the centre of the common good in a community-rated health insurance market is inter-generational solidarity between all insured persons. Under community rating, everybody is charged the same premium for a particular health insurance plan, irrespective of age, gender and the current or likely future state of their health. The objective has always been that the price of a policy should reflect the risks and costs of the entire pool of insured persons in the community, rather than the risks and costs on a person by person basis and indeed on an insurer by insurer by basis.

The pricing of risk across the community of insured persons requires robust mechanisms to share costs when there are a number of insurance companies in the market. If a mechanism to share risk and attendant costs is not present, an insurer with a less profitable risk profile can quickly find themselves in a perilous position financially. The standard transfer mechanism is known as risk equalisation and it is a key element of health insurance, not just in Ireland but internationally. Risk equalisation is a process that aims to equitably neutralise differences in insurers' claim costs that arise due to variations in the health status of their members. The aim of risk equalisation is to look at the market as a whole, and to distribute fairly the differences that arise in insurers' costs due to the differing health status of all of their customers. Risk equalisation aims to make health insurance more affordable for older people by supporting community-rated premiums. In general, younger people pay more and older people pay less than what would normally apply in a risk-rated system.

I am committed to progressively increasing the extent to which risk equalisation compensates for the costs of insuring older customers. A permanent Risk Equalisation Scheme (RES) was introduced with effect from 1 January, 2013. Prior to the introduction of the permanent RES, an Interim Scheme of Age-Related Tax Credits and Community Rating Levy had been in operation from 2009 to 2012. Yesterday I received Government approval to the immediate publication of the Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill 2013, which sets out revised risk equalisation credits and the corresponding stamp duties that will apply under the Risk Equalisation Scheme from 1 March 2014. Different risk equalisation credits will apply to 'advanced' and 'non-advanced' health insurance policies. There will be no change to the stamp duty payable on lower cost 'non-advanced' health insurance, which will help to ensure that the option of lower cost health insurance remains available. The stamp duty for health insurance products providing 'advanced' cover will increase from €350 to €399 per adult and from €120 to €135 per child. This will help direct support, in the form of higher risk equalisation credits, where it is needed most and will subsidise health insurance for the most vulnerable patients. Under the Health Insurance Acts, I set the rates for risk equalisation credits and the Minister for Finance sets the rate of stamp duty required to fund those credits.

These measures will ensure that we continue to protect community rated health insurance, which is a vital part of our health system, now and in the future as we move to Universal Health Insurance.

Hospital Waiting Lists

188. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of instances reported whereby patients seeking treatment for cancer have been put on waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48546/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The quality and safety of our health services, including cancer services, has been a focus over the past number of years and this will continue in 2014 in the context of the HSE Service Plan for 2014. I wrote to the HSE on Thursday 31 October to confirm that the Executive has until 15 November to submit its Service Plan. In that letter, I also conveyed to the Executive that my overriding priority is patient safety, with the next priority being to treat patients in as timely a fashion as possible. A key priority for 2014 will be to further support the eight designated cancer centres, within available resources, to maintain continued improvements in diagnosis, surgery and multi-disciplinary care.

Clearly, the diagnosis and treatment of patients with cancer is a high priority for my Department and the HSE. I welcome the huge improvements that have been made in recent years, led by the HSE National Cancer Control Programme. It is very encouraging to note that five year

relative survival for all cancers is rising and is now 56.4% for people diagnosed between 2003-2007, as compared with 49.6% for people diagnosed in 1998-2002. The HSE has established symptomatic breast clinics and rapid access, lung and prostate clinics in each of the eight cancer centres. Performance of these clinics is monitored through the collection of key performance indicators. The HSE has advised that in Q3 2013, access targets for both urgent and routine referrals to breast cancer clinics are being exceeded in the designated cancer centres in aggregate (95%). In relation to access to lung cancer clinics, 94.9% of patients in Q3 2013 in aggregate were offered an appointment within 10 working days, just under the target of 95%. While further progress is required in relation to access targets for prostate cancer clinics in Q3, the percentage of patients being offered an appointment within the target time is 50.2%, up from 47% last year. All referrals to these centres are triaged and urgent cases are prioritised and appointments offered to all appropriate patients in the first instance.

With regard to paediatric cancer care, Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin is the national tertiary paediatric and adolescent referral centre for all cancer services. I am advised that children are treated according to international protocols and standards of care, that all care is clinically prioritised by consultants and that there are no extraordinary delays for children accessing cancer services.

In relation to the Deputy's query regarding the number of instances reported whereby patients seeking treatment for cancer have been put on waiting lists, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly on this.

Question No. 189 answered with Question No. 179.

Question No. 190 answered with Question No. 185.

Hospital Staff Issues

191. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which adequate numbers of non-consultant hospital doctors are available and adequate to meet requirements throughout the health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48549/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am committed to improving the working conditions of non-consultant hospital doctors (NCHDs) and to ensuring that they can have a suitable career pathway within the Irish health system. Intensive work is underway in all hospitals to pursue compliance with the European Working Time Directive on junior doctors' working-hours. The immediate focus, involving the HSE, hospital management, the IMO and NCHDs, is on eliminating shifts in excess of 24 hours.

In July this year, I set up a working group chaired by Professor Brian MacCraith, President of DCU, to carry out a strategic review of the medical training and career structure of NCHDs. I see this as a modernising initiative which is needed urgently and which will, in future years, support the retention of sufficient numbers of doctors trained in Ireland within the system.

The great majority of NCHD posts are filled at present. However there are a limited number of vacancies, mainly in smaller hospitals and in certain specialties, including Emergency Medicine and General Medicine at Registrar level. Filling these posts represents a challenge given that there are shortages internationally, there is a competitive market and that it can be more difficult to attract doctors to some hospitals than others.

Where sites continue to experience challenges in terms of vacancies, hospital management implement contingency plans. If necessary, hospitals make locum arrangements to ensure

continued service delivery. System reform, in particular the implementation of the Report on Hospital Groups and the Framework for the Development of Smaller Hospitals will assist in achievement of a more focused and efficient deployment of NCHD staffing. These changes will build on the significant work that has been done through the HSE National Clinical programmes in recent years.

Hospital Bed Data

192. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the total number of public hospital beds currently available; the extent to which this has fluctuated on an annual basis over the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48550/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

Health Services Staff Issues

193. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which permanent nursing staff remains to be available throughout the public health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48551/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): All staffing arrangements have to be considered in the light of the current budgetary pressures in the health service and the need to reduce the numbers employed throughout the public sector. Staff appointments may be made only where an inescapable service need has been identified and which cannot be addressed by other means, such as the redeployment of staff or reorganisation of services.

Notwithstanding these restrictions, I am satisfied that sufficient nursing capacity can be provided throughout the public health service. The Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2016 (The Haddington Road Agreement) provides for health service staff to increase their working hours. The value ascribed to this element of the Agreement is in the region of five million hours annually for the health workforce as a whole. In the case of nurses and midwives, the standard working-week has increased from 37.5 to 39 hours. Given the number of nurses and midwives in the public health service (about one-third of the workforce), these additional working-hours represent significant additional capacity.

The Haddington Road Agreement also provides for the implementation of the Graduate Nurse/Midwife Placement Initiative on an agreed basis with the health unions. Staff are currently being appointed under this scheme. In addition, as part of the 2014 Estimates process, it has been agreed that the HSE will establish a Nurse Bank. This measure will improve the continuity of nurse-provided care and will also reduce reliance on agency staffing.

The Report of the Review of the Undergraduate Nursing and Midwifery Degree Programmes, published in 2012, found that the numbers of nurses and midwives currently being trained are sufficient to meet current demand. The Report also recommended that a five year workforce plan, to be reviewed regularly, should be undertaken by the HSE in co-operation with the Department of Health, taking into account the extent of change planned under the reform agenda and economic considerations referred to above. I can confirm to the Deputy that the HSE has commenced this process.

Hospital Staff Issues

194. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the degree to which comparisons are being made with other jurisdictions in regard to public hospital staffing levels, all grades, with those in this country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48552/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Enhancing workforce planning is critical to the successful delivery of the strategic objectives of our public health services.

Under the Strategic Framework for Reform of the Health Service 2012-2015 my Department is working with the HSE to develop and implement approaches to workforce planning and development that include recruiting and retaining the right mix of staff, training and upskilling the workforce, providing for professional and career development, and creating supportive and healthy workplaces. To inform this process models of practice in other countries, including staffing levels and grades, are being examined.

Ireland is also participating in the EU Joint Action on Workforce Planning, funded under the 2012 Health Programme, which will create a European platform to share good practice and to develop methodologies on forecasting health workforce and skills needs. This three year EU Joint Action will have a positive impact on: developing forecasting methodologies on health workforce needs and effective workforce planning; improving EU wide data on the health workforce; and on the exchange of good practice in planning methodology.

Nursing Home Inspections

195. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which expenditure has been carried out at public nursing homes throughout the country at the request of the Health Information and Quality Authority in each of the past five years to date; if all such expenditure was carried out for actual health and safety reasons when compared to other jurisdictions; if the subdivision of wards is deemed to be beneficial or health and safety driven; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48553/13]

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.

Nursing Home Accommodation

196. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which expenditure has been undertaken at St. Bridget's nursing home, Crooksling, in each of the past five years to date; the extent of such works that are deemed necessary on health and safety grounds, if subdivision of existing wards is deemed a health and safety issue, if it might be better to upgrade the quality of all accommodation thus eliminating the necessity to close down any of the existing accommodation thereby accommodating a greater number of patients and achieving a much better staff-patient ratio and cost-effectiveness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48554/13]

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.

Health Services Staff Issues

197. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the new Health Service Executive voluntary redundancy scheme 2014 offer. [48555/13]

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. This policy requires the health service to reduce its workforce to just under 98,000 whole-time equivalent employees (WTE) by the end of 2014.

Earlier this year my Department authorised the introduction of a Targeted Voluntary Redundancy (VR) Scheme in the HSE and in organisations funded by the HSE under Section 38 of the Health Act 2004. The purpose of the scheme is to achieve a permanent reduction in numbers and to facilitate on-going health sector reform. The HSE will determine the areas and functions where there is scope to reduce employee numbers in the context of changing health sector structures and roles, for example, as a result of implementation of productivity measures provided for in the Haddington Road Agreement.

The scheme will be implemented on a rolling basis as appropriate areas and functions are identified. Employees in the areas targeted will be given an opportunity to avail of the scheme but there will be no automatic right to redundancy.

The HSE will operate the Targeted Voluntary Redundancy Scheme in 2014 and subsequent years as a key element in the reform of the health service. It will enable the HSE and other service providers to maximise the quantum and quality of services provided within the resources available.

Motor Tax Collection

198. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the motor tax renewal discrepancy of one month, in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 4 will be corrected. [48497/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The records on my Department's National Vehicle and Driver File indicate that the motor tax disc for the vehicle in question expired on 31 October 2013. The vehicle was taxed through the on-line motor tax service on 22 October 2013 for a period of twelve months, commencing 1 November 2013, and expiring on 31 October 2014. Accordingly, the expiry date on the disc issued to the owner is correctly displayed as 10-14.

Roads Maintenance

199. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be allocated to the National Roads Authority in 2014 in respect of necessary upgrading of the east-west route from Cootehill, County Cavan through Shercock and Carrickmacross to Dundalk; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48389/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities' own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

Cavan County Council was provided with over €2 million between 2007 and 2012 from my Department in connection with this project under the Strategic Non National Road Grants Scheme in order to bring this 75 km route to preliminary design stage.

Cavan County Council has also been allocated €400,000 for this scheme in 2013 and it is expected that the preliminary design will be completed in Q2 of 2014.

It should be noted that the Strategic Grants scheme is scheduled to be discontinued from 2014 onward in order to focus monies on the repair and maintenance of regional and local roads. The small amount of funding available for major schemes will focus on projects already under construction or to which the Department is already committed.

I will announce the 2014 regional and local road grant allocations early in the new year.

Sports Capital Programme Eligibility

200. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the most frequent reasons that applications under the sports capital grant 2012 scheme were deemed ineligible; the steps he is taking to reduce the level of ineligible applications under the new funding round; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48404/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): The main reasons why applications under the 2012 SCP were deemed invalid were: No evidence of title/letter from landlord; No evidence of planning application; Insufficient own funding; No evidence of required amount of own funding.

These four reasons accounted for 75% of invalid applications. All unsuccessful applicants received letters setting out the reasons why their application was deemed invalid. If a particular applicant requires any more information or clarification they should contact the Sports Capital Programmes Unit of my Department in Killarney.

My officials are working on the terms and conditions of the next Programme. Part of this process includes examining possible measures to reduce the proportion of invalid applications. However, it is ultimately a matter for applicants to ensure that applications meet the Programme's criteria.

Driving Licence Issues

201. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the costs involved in opening each of the new 34 driving licence centres; if any American or overseas companies were outsourced to handle data of any kind in the set-up of the new national driver licence service; if so, the steps taken to ensure confidential information was protected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48474/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The subject matter of this question, namely the operation of the National Driver Licensing Service, is the statutory responsibility of the Road Safety Authority. Accordingly, I have forwarded the Deputy's query to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response has not been received within ten days.

Driving Licence Issues

13 November 2013

202. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will intervene on behalf of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry who, through no fault of their own, had their full bus licence revoked by Kerry County Council which admitted it issued the licence in error in 2001, and who has now been informed by Bus Éireann that they require a licence prior to 4 December 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48475/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority as the National Driver Licensing Authority, and I have therefore forwarded the Deputy's query to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a reply has not been received within ten days.