

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].

The following Ministers/Ministers of State were not elected as Members of the 32nd Dáil but under their ministerial portfolios are styled Deputy for indexing and search purposes:

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs—James Reilly

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources—Alex White

Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation—Gerald Nash

Minister of State at the Departments of the Taoiseach and Foreign Affairs and Trade—Jimmy Deenihan

Minister of State at the Department of Health—Kathleen Lynch

Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine—Tom Hayes

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government—Paudie Coffey

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection—Kevin Humphreys

Minister of State at the Departments of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Environment, Community and Local Government—Ann Phelan

Minister of State at the Departments of Justice and Equality, Arts, Heritage and the Gael-tacht and Health—Aodhán Ó Ríordáin

Census of Population Publication

1. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach why a company (details supplied) was awarded the contract for census printing and data capture services for Census 2016, given that the company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of an American owned contractor associated with human rights abuses in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq; and if any other companies tendered for this contract. [9174/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Census 2016 is being organised and carried out by the Central Statistics Office. Both the fieldwork and the processing of the collected forms are undertaken by CSO employees.

The census is a major undertaking for the CSO and contractors have been appointed to assist with specialised parts of the work. An outside contractor, CACI (UK) Ltd, was awarded the contract following a public procurement process to build and support an integrated forms processing system for CSO. The design and print of the Census forms was also required as part of this contract, and this has been sub-contracted to an Irish company.

The forms processing system will be managed and operated by CSO staff, with the technical support of a small number of CACI (UK) employees, and will be used to process the completed census forms in the second half of this year. The completed census forms, and any resultant databases of the returns created during the processing, will at all stages be completely under the control of the CSO and subject to the stringent confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act 1993.

The selection of the contractor was subject to, and complied fully with, EU open procurement rules. CACI (UK) Ltd has specialist skills in the area of high volume forms processing systems and won a similar contract in 2011. CACI (UK) Ltd was the only bidder for the contract tendered by CSO for the 2016 census.

As a public body the Central Statistics Office is fundamentally committed to ethical and proper conduct in all matters.

Employment Data

2. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Taoiseach the number of jobs created and lost in County Louth from 2013 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9184/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The exact information requested by the Deputy is not available. The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) is the official source of estimates of employment in the State. The most recent figures available are for Q4 2015.

Estimates of employment are produced by NUTS 3 Regions.

The NUTS 3 Border region includes Counties Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo. Due to methodology and sample size it is not possible to produce reliable Louth County estimates from the QNHS.

Table 1a shows the number of persons aged 15 years and over in employment classified by NUTS 3 Border region in Q4 of each year from 2012 to 2015.

Table 1b shows the annual change in the numbers of persons aged 15 years and over in employment classified by NUTS 3 Border region in Q4 of each year from 2013 to 2015.

As Table 1a shows the overall stock of persons employed at given points in time, the annual changes which are calculated using these stock figures depend both on the number of jobs lost and jobs created over the period in question.

The QNHS does not record whether a job is newly created.

Table 1a Persons aged 15 years and over in employment (ILO) classified by Border NUTS3 region, Q4 2012 - Q4 2015

‘000

-	Q4 12	Q4 13	Q4 14	Q4 15
In employment	171.5	185.8	185.8	195.0

Table 1b Persons aged 15 years and over in employment (ILO) classified by Border NUTS3 region, Q4 2013 - Q4 2015 - Annual change

‘000

-	Q4 13	Q4 14	Q4 15
In employment	14.3	0.0	9.2

Data may be subject to sampling or other survey errors, which are greater in respect of smaller values or estimates of change.

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey, Central Statistics Office.;

Reference period: Q4=Oct-Dec.

National Internship Scheme Funding

3. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the details of the funding, from the Government and the European Union, allocated to the JobBridge scheme, in tabular form. [9106/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): JobBridge was introduced in July 2011 in response to the sharp increase in unemployment resulting from the unprecedented collapse in the economy. Since then over 18,500 Host Organisations have provided internship opportunities to over 46,500 unemployed jobseekers. Independent research indicates that circa 60% of jobseekers who participated in JobBridge progressed into paid employment within a short period (5 months) of completing the internship.

One of the objectives of JobBridge was to address the situation whereby unemployed people in receipt of a jobseeker payment who took up an unpaid work experience opportunity lost entitlement to their jobseeker payment. Under JobBridge unemployed jobseekers who take up a work experience opportunity retain their jobseeker payment and, in addition, receive a sum of €52.50 per week towards the cost of taking up the opportunity

Total expenditure on JobBridge is set out in Table 1. It should be noted that these amounts include, and consist primarily of, the underlying jobseeker payment.

As part of the EU Youth Guarantee initiative some expenditure relating to interns under 25 years of age may, in future, be reclaimed under the European Social Fund (ESF) and Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) as part of the ESF Operational Programme 2014-2020.

Table 1

-	2011 ‘€000	2012 ‘€000	2013 ‘€000	2014 ‘€000	2015 ‘€000
Expenditure	7,913	54,739	67,688	76,029	63,500

The estimated expenditure for 2016 is €51.98m.

Youth Guarantee

4. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection for a progress report regarding the national implementation of the Youth Guarantee. [9107/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Government's primary strategy to tackle youth unemployment is to create the environment for a strong economic recovery by promoting competitiveness and productivity. Economic recovery will underpin jobs growth and the availability of productive employment for young people.

The Government recognises that as the recovery takes hold, there is a need for additional measures to ensure that as many as possible of the jobs created are taken up by jobseekers and young jobseekers in particular. This is the rationale behind the Government's Pathways to Work strategy and the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan.

Within this framework, the Youth Guarantee sets a medium-term objective of ensuring that young people receive an offer of employment, education or training within four months of becoming unemployed.

As under services such as Intreo, Youthreach, VTOS, PLC programmes, JobsPlus and Job-Bridge, Ireland already had many of the recommended component parts of a Youth Guarantee, the main approach in Ireland is to prioritise access to these existing supports for young people, who become unemployed, with the objective of ensuring that they have an opportunity for employment, further education or work experience within the recommended period of four months as per the EU council recommendation.

The key objective is to help newly unemployed young people find and secure sustainable jobs. In this regard there is monthly engagement with young people by case officers to assist young people to prepare, review and, if appropriate, revise personal progression plans. As part of this process additional supports may be provided, both through existing schemes and through youth-specific measures. Most such offers (over 70%) are in existing further education or training programmes. Others are in existing community-based employment programmes such as CE, Gateway and Tús. Overall, over 19,100 opportunities were taken up on the relevant programmes in 2015.

Pathways to Work 2016-2020, published in January 2016, commits to continuing to implement the actions set out in the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP). In addition, it commits to four additional actions:

- Increase the share of workplace-based interventions;
- Restructure First Steps (a work experience programme for particularly disadvantaged young people);
- Ensure monthly engagement with young unemployed, at a minimum, is consistently maintained; and
- Implement the Defence Forces Skills for Life employment support programme.

The operation and coverage of the Youth Guarantee will be reviewed in mid-2016, based on data on outcomes for young people who became unemployed up to the end of 2015, and in the light of developments in the economy and in the labour market in the context of the overall

Pathways to Work strategy.

Implementation of the Youth Guarantee is reviewed independently by the EU. Ireland has been reviewed twice (in December 2014 and in December 2015) on its implementation of measures to tackle youth unemployment as part of the Youth Guarantee, through the EU Semester multi-lateral surveillance process within the EMCO (Employment Committee). For the December 2015 review, EMCO concluded:

- EMCO welcomes the efforts to implement the YG in Ireland and the positive results being experienced in relation to youth unemployment. These positive outcomes should be continued together with efforts to reduce the timespan within which the offer to young people is made.

- Ireland has introduced several new programmes in 2015, in addition to the pre-existing programmes, offering employment, work experience and training/developmental internship opportunities to the youth. Programmes are relevant to address youth labour market challenges and address the issues underlying the YG. EMCO is looking forward to overall evaluation results of the new initiatives. Substantial progress has been made in the FET/VET sector and apprenticeships, aimed at ensuring their relevance to labour market needs. Ireland has also taken important steps toward reforming the PES and providing a more effective PES engagement process. As regards the 2014 data collection exercise, data cover those aged 18-24 and in receipt of unemployment benefits.

The following table details the original expected full year intake on relevant programmes for 2015 as well the actual number of starters up to the most recent date for which data are available.

These data exclude an estimated 24,000 places provided for young people through PLC courses and apprenticeships. Although not reserved for unemployed jobseekers, these PLC and apprenticeship places, together with the wide range of vocational third-level courses provided for young people, nevertheless contribute to the spirit of the guarantee.

Programme take-up on Youth Guarantee-related programmes

End of Year 2015 (information available up to 11th February 2016)

Programme	Expected full-year intake	2015 information to date	Note
Youthreach	3,300	1684	Expected full year intake combines Youthreach and Community Training Centres. Youthreach data to end September 2015
Community Training Centres		1528	
JobBridge	5,000	2,296	
Tús	1,000	1,379	
JobsPlus (including JobPlus Youth)	1,500	676	February -December 2015
Momentum	2,000	1,066	
BTEA (excl Momentum)	3,300	2,900	

Questions - Written Answers

Programme	Expected full-year intake	2015 information to date	Note
BTWEA	200	146	
VTOS	500	n/a	Enrolment begins in September
Former FÁS/SO-LAS*	9,500	6,629	Based on Specific Skills Training, Traineeship, Bridging & Local Training Initiative starters.
County Enterprise Board Youth Entrepreneurship Training and Mentoring supports.	700		This programme has been superseded by Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) 2014/5 competition ¹
Micro Finance Ireland (MFI) youth loans	9	3	MFI defines 'youth' loans as loans for those aged 18-25. 14 have been advanced since MFI began operations, including 2 in 2016.
International Work Experience and Training	250	8	
Gateway	450	144	
Community Employment	500	715	
Total	28,350	19,171	Excluding where figures are not available

- ¹. The IBYE is an entrepreneurship support measure aimed at encouraging young people to start their own businesses and accordingly covers a wider age range (from 18-30). There were 1,398 applicants in 2015 and 1,018 in 2014.

Farm Assist Scheme Data

5. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of farm assist, by county, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8808/16]

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

Recipients of Farm Assist by county at 31 March 2016	-
Carlow	63
Cavan	286
Clare	429
Cork	624
Donegal	1,309

Recipients of Farm Assist by county at 31 March 2016	-
Dublin	32
Galway	785
Kerry	572
Kildare	21
Kilkenny	95
Laois	97
Leitrim	343
Limerick	150
Longford	171
Louth	69
Mayo	1,259
Meath	54
Monaghan	372
Offaly	80
Roscommon	313
Sligo	227
Tipperary	280
Waterford	66
Westmeath	128
Wexford	163
Wicklow	51
Total	8,039

Disability Allowance Appeals

6. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the progress of a review of an application by a person (details supplied) under the disability allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8820/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all the evidence, disallowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of summary decision on 2 February 2016.

Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of the Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed by the Appeals Officer in the light of new evidence or new facts. I am advised that the person concerned subsequently submitted additional evidence and that the Appeals Officer agreed to review his decision on foot of this additional evidence. Regrettably the Appeals Officer did not find any new facts or fresh evidence which warranted a revision of his earlier decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's review of his decision.

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

Part-Time Job Incentive Scheme Eligibility

7. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 37 of 20 April 2016, if she will re-assess the eligibility of a person (details supplied) with particular reference to equality, as it appears the person was denied eligibility on grounds of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8840/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In line with section 142A of the Social Welfare Consolidation 2005, the person concerned was in receipt of an age related rate of jobseeker's allowance. The person concerned applied for the part-time job incentive scheme (PTJI) and one of the qualifying conditions is that the rate of the applicant's jobseeker payment must be higher than the applicable rate of PTJI. The application of the person concerned was refused as she did not meet that condition. Departmental officials will arrange to meet with her to discuss her options.

Credit Union Lending

8. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of her collaboration with the Irish League of Credit Unions on providing small loans to persons on lower incomes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8861/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A Personal Micro Credit Scheme has been developed under the auspices of the Citizens Information Board and the Social Finance Foundation and supported by the Department of Social Protection. The Scheme, which is currently being piloted, provides for small scale loans by Credit Unions to borrowers who have difficulty accessing low cost credit. The loans under the scheme range from €100 to a maximum of €2,000.

The focus of the pilot scheme is social welfare recipients who avail of Personal Micro Credit loans from their Credit Union and are facilitated, with their consent, in the repayment of such loans through the Household Budgeting facility, operated by An Post. The deductions from their weekly social welfare payments are then transmitted on to the relevant Credit Union.

The pilot scheme is live in 30 Credit Unions, 28 of which have written loans. Almost 1,200 loans have been drawn down to date. The average value of loans drawn down is €500. From information gathered to date, sixty eight percent (68%) of loans are for amounts of €500 or less, twenty eight percent (28%) are in the €500 to €1,500 range, with the balance of four percent (4%) in the upper €1,500 to €2,000 range. The pilot is expected to be completed by the end of May 2016. The findings of an evaluation report to be completed on the pilot scheme will help to inform the final scheme model to be rolled out nationwide, if the pilot is successful.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

9. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why on a voluntary training opportunities scheme course no longer counts towards the eligibility period for community employment schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8875/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): Time spent on a VTOS course does count towards CE eligibility. The current eligibility criteria for Community Employment (CE) published on the *welfare.ie* public website includes the following clause, "Time spent on recognised training programmes (such as a SOLAS/ETB training course or VTOS Course) or in prison can also be counted towards eligibility."

Social Welfare Payments Administration

10. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection her views on social protection payments being paid through banks (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8879/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Government is committed to the maintenance of the Post Office network and to the development of a Standard Bank Account by An Post. Mindful of the current and ongoing discussions on Government formation any further development of policy will be a matter for the incoming Government.

The current position is that the Department has a cohort of jobseeker customers who are classified as casual jobseekers. These are in-work customers who can claim a jobseeker's payment for 2 to 3 days per week or who work week on/week-off. These customers are paid by cheque each week. Not all customers will be paid every week due to their changeable work patterns.

I want to emphasise that these customers have been paid by cheque due to the changing nature of their work/claiming patterns and the short turn-around time to issue payments. It is important to note that they are not paid via post offices under the Department's existing cash payments contract with An Post.

In line with the National Payments Plan, my Department is seeking to reduce its usage of cheques as a payment method; this is not only a matter of decreasing the significant costs associated with cheques in the Department and wider economy but also of moving to a more secure method of payment and enhancing customer convenience.

When paid by cheque, customers have the option of lodging them direct to their accounts or negotiating them at banks or the Post Office. The evidence available to the Department is that the majority of the Department's customers paid by cheque choose to lodge them direct to their accounts.

The Department has developed its payment capacity in respect of changing work and claiming patterns and is able to offer payments direct to accounts in financial institutions for casual jobseeker customers thereby increasing customer convenience. This is in line with wider departmental policy where the focus is on ensuring that in-work customers are paid by the most convenient method possible.

Consequently the Department has written to its casual jobseeker customers asking them to provide their account details to enable direct payments to financial institutions.

I want to emphasise that the Department does not issue these cheque payments to Post Offices, they are issued directly to the Department's customers. This process does not reduce the number of existing cash payments through Post Offices under the current contract between the Department and An Post.

I want to reiterate that what the Department is doing is moving customers from cheque payments to the much more secure, customer convenient and cost effective payment method of payment directly into accounts in financial institutions. This is entirely consistent with the National Payments Plan and in line with payment methods that now prevail across the economy. The Department must consider the most efficient payment method for our customers who are in employment most of whom get their salary payment into bank accounts. To have weekly income (work + welfare) payable in two different ways is a highly inappropriate and costly way of dealing with people in employment. The Department's focus must be on our customers.

Customer choice will be maintained. Customers, if they wish, may continue to receive cheque payments in the medium term.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

11. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when she will forward a file from the domiciliary care allowance section to the social protection appeals office for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8882/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A review of the decision to disallow Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) was requested on 10th September 2015 and the person concerned was notified on 11th December 2015 that following an examination of the file the original decision was upheld.

Subsequently, the person concerned lodged an appeal on 6th January 2016. The application together with additional information supplied with the appeal, and further additional information received on 15th February 2016, have been forwarded to a medical assessor for their professional opinion. Upon receipt of the Medical Assessor's opinion, the case will be further examined by a deciding officer, who will revise the original decision if warranted, or alternatively, forward the case for consideration by the Appeals Office. Such reviews can take up to 12 weeks to complete at present.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

12. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection her views on immigrants returning home and being precluded from receiving social protection payments (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8883/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Social welfare payments can be broadly divided into two main categories – contributory social insurance payments, which are based on the social insurance contributions paid by the claimant and non-contributory social assistance payments, which are subject to a means test.

The social welfare supports available to returned emigrants will therefore depend on the person's particular circumstances, including whether the person has previously paid social insurance contributions in Ireland, the length of time spent working in Ireland before emigrating, the length of time spent abroad and whether the person worked in the EU or elsewhere.

For instance, a person who returns to Ireland after having spent a period working in another EU Member State may qualify for certain social insurance benefits from Ireland or from that other Member State, depending on the circumstances. Where a returned emigrant does not qualify for a social insurance payment, he or she may apply for a social assistance payment, such as jobseeker's allowance.

In order to qualify for social welfare payments in Ireland an applicant must satisfy the eligibility criteria applicable to the scheme concerned. In all cases, decisions on the eligibility of persons are made following consideration of all the circumstances of the person concerned. In addition to having to satisfy a means test and other eligibility criteria directly relevant to the specific payment being claimed, applicants for most social assistance payments must also be determined as being habitually resident in the State in order to qualify.

4 May 2016

The Department of Social Protection's published guidelines on the application of the habitual residence condition specifically address the issue of returning emigrants. Returning emigrants who have previously been habitually resident in the State and who moved to live and work in another country and then resume their long-term residence in the State may be determined as habitually resident in the State immediately on their return to the State.

Arrangements are in place with Safe-Home Ltd, a registered charity, to assist with any difficulty experienced by a minority of returning emigrants in demonstrating their intention to live in the State permanently for the purposes of satisfying the habitual residence condition.

The current Intreo decision process is designed to speed up decisions. Persons applying for jobseeker's allowance or one-parent family payment would normally be given an early appointment to discuss their application. Once the requested information is provided to support the application at the subsequent meeting with an official of the Department, there is usually minimal delay in processing the application to decision. The latest performance statistics available to the Department indicate that, on average, applications for jobseeker's allowance take two weeks to process, while applications for one-parent family payment are processed within five weeks - reflecting the increased conditionality involved in qualifying for that payment.

It is open to anyone who is dissatisfied with a decision on the application of the habitual residence condition in relation to entitlement to a social welfare payment to appeal that decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

If the Deputy has information on a returned emigrant who is experiencing difficulty in accessing a social welfare payment, I will have the matter examined if he brings details of the case to my attention.

Community Employment Schemes Administration

13. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection her views on recruitment barriers in community employment schemes (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8886/16]

14. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection to introduce provisions on the minimum age and eligibility for community employment schemes (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8887/16]

15. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection to allow additional financial support for lone parents on community employment schemes (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8896/16]

16. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection to set the minimum time on community employment schemes at two years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8897/16]

17. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection to allow all persons over 62 years of age to stay on community employment schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8898/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 13 to 17, inclusive, together.

Community Employment (CE) is a labour market activation programme which helps long-

term unemployed people (those 12-months or more in receipt of a jobseeker's payment) and other disadvantaged groups to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to work routine. It is designed to be a temporary fixed-term activation intervention. The programme assists participants to enhance and develop both their technical and personal skills which can then be used in the workplace.

A number of persons who sign on to the Live Register generally exit it again within a short timeframe, without any recourse to employment schemes or intensive activation measures. Accordingly, it is considered appropriate that the CE scheme will remain focused on those who are long-term unemployed. There are other interventions and activation options operated by the Department for those who are short-term unemployed, for example, advice on job-search activities and the use of online job search tools.

In general participants can avail of 12 months participation on CE. There are no plans to extend the standard CE participation period up to two years minimum as this would result in a reduction in throughput from the scheme, thereby reducing the overall number of CE beneficiaries per year.

The standard minimum entry age for CE is 25 years of age. It is worth noting that the entry age for dedicated childcare and health and social care positions that involve working *directly* with service users was lowered to 21 years of age. There are no plans to further reduce the standard minimum entry for other positions.

With effect from 3rd April 2000, lifetime cumulative participation on CE by an individual is limited to 3 years (156 weeks) for persons under 55 years of age and 6 years (312 weeks) for persons of 55 years of age up to and including 65 years of age. Eligible persons in receipt of a qualifying disability-linked Social Welfare payment are eligible for one additional year on CE over the standard maximum participation caps. Participation on a CE scheme prior to 3rd April 2000 is not counted when calculating the length of time a person can participate. There are no plans to change this date as the duration allows for maximum utilisation of the CE placements amongst the greatest number of participants.

The CE programme provides funding for participants aged up to 65 years of age who meet the current eligibility criteria. The Tánaiste announced a pilot initiative in December 2015 to enable those aged 62 and over to extend their participation beyond the standard maximum participation limits (currently set at 6 years cumulative lifetime participation) providing the eligibility conditions are met. Participants are allowed to participate on a continuous basis up to the State Pension age, subject to satisfactory performance on the scheme and to annual approval by the Department. The places allocated for these participants within each individual CE scheme are limited to 7% of each scheme's overall budgeted places.

With respect to participation by lone parents on CE, in addition to the existing financial supports available, a number of other incentives are in place. This includes the Community Employment Childcare (CEC) programme. As childcare is a crucial element for parents embarking on CE or returning to the workforce, this programme ensures that CE participants get the childcare supports they need to have a better future for themselves and their families.

The eligibility criteria for CE places is kept under ongoing review to ensure they are effective in targeting long-term unemployed jobseekers and other specific disadvantaged groups. In the context of the Local Employment Service (LES) it is intended that they provide an intensive engagement with customers which includes a target of 30% of customers placed into full-time employment. This target does not include those placed into education and training. While CE schemes are intended to help long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce, they are not full-time sustainable jobs and cannot be included in this target.

If a particular CE scheme is encountering difficulties in recruiting participants, additional assistance can be provided by the local departmental staff to resolve any local barriers or issues. The Department is committed to enhancing the effectiveness of the CE Programme whilst being conscious of the valuable contribution it is making in the provision of services to individuals and communities across Ireland.

Carer's Allowance Delays

18. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) in County Sligo under the carer's allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8909/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the Department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 14 January 2016. Unfortunately, the average time taken at present to decide a new application is running at 19 weeks. Additional resources have been provided to the CA section in order to improve the waiting times for new applications and they are working hard to make this happen.

Frequently, delays are outside the control of the Department and are caused by the customer failing to fully complete the claim form or failing to attach the supporting documentation that is requested on the application form.

This application will be processed as quickly as possible and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome. In the meantime, both the person concerned and his spouse are in receipt of a weekly social welfare support.

Carer's Allowance Delays

19. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) in County Sligo under the carer's allowance scheme. [8911/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the Department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 27 January 2016. Unfortunately, the average time taken at present to decide a new application is running at 19 weeks. Additional resources have been provided to the CA section in order to improve the waiting times for new applications and they are working hard to make this happen.

Frequently, delays are outside the control of the Department and are caused by the customer failing to fully complete the claim form or failing to attach the supporting documentation that is requested on the application form.

This application will be processed as quickly as possible and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

In the meantime, if the means of the person concerned are insufficient to meet her needs she should apply for a means tested supplementary welfare allowance from her local community welfare service.

Work Placement Programmes

20. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of work placement schemes in relation to persons on social protection allowance (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8927/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys): Tús and Gateway are work placement initiatives which aim to provide work opportunities for those who are long-term unemployed and on the live register for a specific period. The eligibility criteria are in line with the Government's policies to focus resources on maintaining the work readiness and employability of jobseekers on the live register. In order to maintain this focus, persons not in receipt of a jobseeker's payment from the Department are not eligible for selection for these initiatives.

The Deputy should note, however, that persons in receipt of disability allowance (DA), and certain other payments from the Department, are eligible for a range of other activation initiatives. These include JobBridge, the rural social scheme, community employment, back to work and back to education allowances, as well as other education and training supports. Additionally, a range of supports designed specifically to support people with disabilities and employers (to offer and maintain job opportunities for people with disabilities) are funded and delivered by the Department. These include a wage subsidy scheme and resources to offset the costs of providing reasonable accommodation for the employment of a person with a disability or restricted mobility.

A person in receipt of DA is permitted and encouraged to work if their medical adviser recommends that such work is of a rehabilitative or therapeutic nature. They can earn up to €120 per week without it affecting their DA claim. Persons in receipt of DA also have the option of giving up their allowance in favour of jobseeker's allowance if they wish to be considered for schemes such as Gateway and Tús, provided they meet the eligibility criteria.

Carer's Allowance Applications

21. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8932/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The application for carer's allowance in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 25 April 2016 and the first payment is due to issue to the person's nominated post office on 5 May 2016.

Any arrears of allowance due will issue shortly.

Carer's Allowance Applications

22. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8933/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Carer's Allowance (CA) is a means tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has a disability such that they require that level of care.

The Department informs me that to date there is no record of the receipt of an application for CA from the person concerned. An application form for CA has issued to the person concerned.

Carer's Allowance Applications

23. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8934/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the Department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 4 December 2015. It is a condition for receipt of a CA that the person being cared for must have a disability whose effect is that they require full-time care and attention.

This is defined as requiring from another person, continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions or continuous supervision in order to avoid danger to him or herself and likely to require that level of care for at least twelve months.

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that this evidence did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied and, consequently, that the application was disallowed.

The person concerned was notified on 5 April 2016 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal within 21 days.

Carer's Allowance Delays

24. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8935/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 9 February 2016. Unfortunately, the average time taken at present to decide a new application is running at 19 weeks. Additional resources have been provided to the CA section in order to improve the waiting times for new applications and they are working hard to make this happen.

Frequently, delays are outside the control of the Department and are caused by the customer failing to fully complete the claim form or failing to attach the supporting documentation that is requested on the application form.

This application will be processed as quickly as possible and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome. In the meantime, both the person concerned and his spouse are in receipt of a weekly social welfare support.

Carer's Allowance Applications

25. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8937/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Carer's Allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has a disability such that they require that level of care.

Where a person can show to the satisfaction of a deciding officer that adequate care has been provided for the care recipient in their absence, they can engage in employment, self-employment or training outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week.

The application for CA from the person concerned was awarded on 19 April 2016 for the period from 3 December 2015 to 23 March 2016. This award will be paid as a lump sum and will issue shortly.

The person concerned no longer has an entitlement to CA from 24 March 2016 as she has commenced employment under the Tús scheme for in excess of 15 hours per week from 21 March 2016.

Arrears of allowance due from 3 December 2015 to 16 March 2016 (less any overlapping social welfare payment and/or outstanding overpayment) will issue in due course. The person concerned was notified of these details on 19 April 2016.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

26. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8938/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence including that adduced at the oral hearing, has decided to disallow the appeal of the person concerned. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision

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

Carer's Allowance Applications

27. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8939/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The application for carer's allowance in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 12 April 2016 and the first payment issued to the person's bank nominated bank account on 21 April 2016.

Arrears of allowance due from 26 November 2015 were also issued to the bank on 21 April 2016. The person concerned was notified of these details on 12 April 2016.

Carer's Allowance Delays

28. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8940/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the

department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 8 February 2016. Unfortunately, the average time taken at present to decide a new application is running at 19 weeks. Additional resources have been provided to the CA section in order to improve the waiting times for new applications and they are working hard to make this happen.

Frequently, delays are outside the control of the Department and are caused by the customer failing to fully complete the claim form or failing to attach the supporting documentation that is requested on the application form.

This application will be processed as quickly as possible and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

In the meantime, if the means of the person concerned are insufficient to meet her needs she should apply for a means-tested supplementary welfare allowance from her local community welfare service.

Family Income Supplement Appeals

29. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection to review a decision on an application by a person (details supplied) under the family income supplement scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8949/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 31st March 2016. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Social Protection. These papers have been received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 11th April 2016 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.

Departmental Agencies Board Appointments

30. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when she will fill the State board positions on the national board of the Citizens Information Service (details supplied). [8962/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The legislative provisions governing Board membership of the Citizens Information Board (CIB) are contained in the Comhairle Act 2000, the Citizens Information Act 2007, and the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011.

The Board of CIB has seven (7) members at present, including a Chairperson. There are eight (8) vacancies on the Board. In accordance with the Government's agreed new arrangements for filling State Board vacancies and new Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards published in November 2014, vacancies on the Board of CIB were advertised on the Public Appointments Service (PAS) website from 1st to 21st December 2015. The vacancies were also publicised on the Department of Social Protection and CIB websites during the same period.

Applicants were required to meet specific appointment criteria approved by the Minister and which reflected the views of the Chair of CIB.

One hundred and ninety six (196) expressions of interest were received by PAS. An assessment panel, which included the Chairperson of CIB, examined the information provided by all of the candidates. Following assessment, the panel prepared a report and shortlist of potentially appointable candidates for my consideration in early February 2016.

I have decided that it would be more appropriate to allow the incoming Minister for Social Protection to select candidates from the shortlist drawn up by the Public Appointments Service for appointment to the Board, having regard to the legislative requirements.

Disability Allowance Appeals

31. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the disability allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9003/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The application for disability allowance (DA), based upon the evidence submitted, was refused on the grounds that the person in question does not satisfy the medical conditions for the scheme. The person in question was notified in writing of this decision on 14 April 2016.

Recently, the person in question has lodged an appeal with the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). All the relevant papers requested by that Office are being prepared and will be submitted by the department shortly. The SWAO will be in touch with the person in due course in relation to the progress of the appeal.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

32. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the invalidity pension scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9023/16]

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

The department received a claim for IP for the person concerned on the 10 December 2015. The person concerned was refused IP on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. She was notified on the 21 March 2016 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of review or appeal.

The person concerned subsequently appealed the decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) and submitted further medical evidence in support of her appeal. Following a review by a deciding officer of this medical evidence in conjunction with all information available to date, it has been decided that there is no change to the original decision. A submission is being prepared by the department and will be forwarded to the SWAO for determination as soon as possible.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

33. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection to expedite an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9053/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for Carer's Allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 20 November 2015. It is a condition for receipt of a CA that the person being cared for must have a disability whose effect is that they require full-time care and attention.

This is defined as requiring from another person, continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions or continuous supervision in order to avoid danger to him or herself and likely to require that level of care for at least twelve months.

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that this evidence did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied.

The person concerned was notified on 26 February 2016 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal. The person concerned has requested a review and submitted additional evidence in support of his application. The review is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Social Welfare Payments Administration

34. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of recipients of social protection payments who cash their cheques at post offices; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9056/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The department issues cheques across a range of schemes and at different frequencies, cheques can issue on a weekly, monthly or yearly basis and in response to emergency needs. Once the department has issued a cheque it is a matter for the customer how they wish to realise its value. Customers who are paid by cheque may cash them at financial institutions, including post offices, or lodge them directly to their bank accounts. Some customers may negotiate their cheques in the same manner every time they receive one and others may vary the method they wish to use. The Department does not record how cheques are realised by its customers.

In view of the above the department is unable say how many customers cash their cheques at Post Offices. However, the evidence available to the department is that the majority of the department's customers paid by cheque choose to lodge them direct to their accounts.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

35. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection to examine and expedite an appeal by a person (details supplied) under the jobseeker's allowance scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9065/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, including that adduced at the oral hearing, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision.

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

State Pension (Contributory) Appeals

36. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the progress of an appeal for a state pension (contributory) by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9066/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 26th April 2016. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal 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.

Fuel Allowance Payments

37. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection to restore the winter fuel allowance for a period to acknowledge the reality that many older persons are finding it difficult to heat their homes during the recent cold spell; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9113/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The fuel allowance is a payment of €22.50 per week for 26 weeks from October to April, to 391,000 low income households, at an estimated cost of €224 million in 2016. The purpose of this payment is to assist these households with their energy costs. The allowance represents a contribution towards the energy costs of a household. It is not intended to meet those costs in full. Only one allowance is paid per household. My Department also pays an electricity or gas allowance as part of the household benefits package to approximately 419,000 customers, at an estimated cost of €228 million in 2016. Increasing the spending on any of these schemes would have budgetary consequences requiring additional funds, and I am not in a position to do this at the present time.

Under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme, exceptional needs payments may be made to help meet an essential, once-off cost which customers are unable to meet out of their own resources – this may include exceptional heating costs.

The best way to tackle fuel poverty in the long term is to improve the energy efficiency of the dwelling. My Department works closely with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on these issues and in moving forward the actions agreed in the Energy Affordability Strategy. In that regard, the Better Energy Homes scheme provides support towards the installation of attic and wall insulation, and heating system upgrades.

Family Income Supplement Payments

38. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 52 of 26 April 2016, to reassess the case of a person (details supplied) under the family income supplement scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9117/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The rules that govern the FIS Scheme are set down in Social Welfare legislation.

This states that once FIS is granted, it is payable for a 52 week period and except where regulations otherwise provide, the weekly rate remains the same regardless of changes in circumstances. The only exception is an increase in rate following the addition of another qualified child through birth/fostering/adoption.

Increases or decreases in income after the date that from which FIS is awarded do not affect the weekly rate of payment.

The person concerned was awarded FIS from 08th October 2015 to 05th October 2016 and this payment will stay the same for the 52 weeks once the person continues to work a minimum of 19 hours per week.

Carer's Allowance Delays

39. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection why she has not made a decision on an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme given that the person lodged the application on 16 December 2015; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9161/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 16 December 2015.

A decision on this application is expected to be completed shortly and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

In the meantime, both the person concerned and his spouse are in receipt of a weekly social welfare support.

Question No. 40 withdrawn.

Family Income Supplement Applications

41. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for renewal by a person (details supplied) under the family income supplement scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9181/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is currently in receipt of family income supplement (FIS) and this weekly payment will be paid for 52 weeks until 15th June 2016.

I confirm that a FIS renewal application form has been received from this customer for the year from June 2016 to June 2017 and will be processed before his current FIS claim has expired. The person in question will be notified of the details once the renewal claim is processed.

Illness Benefit Eligibility

42. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when she will process and pay an application by a person (details supplied) under the disability benefit scheme and the illness benefit scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9190/16]

Tánaiste and 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.

The person concerned made a claim to illness benefit and this claim was received in my department on 8 Apr 2016. The person concerned is qualified for a graduated rate of illness benefit of 147.30 based on their earnings in the governing contribution year (2014).

The person concerned stated on their application that their spouse/partner is in receipt of jobseekers allowance. It was necessary to ascertain if a qualified adult increase was paid in respect of the person concerned before payment of illness benefit could commence.

Following a review of the case and the full entitlement due to the household, my department contacted the person concerned on 29 Apr 2016 and advised that it would be more financially beneficial to the household if the person concerned remained as a qualified adult dependent on their spouse/partner's Jobseeker claim. The person concerned has confirmed that they wish to remain as a qualified adult dependent on their spouse/partner's Jobseekers claim.

The household unit will receive the maximum amount payable taking account of their particular circumstances.

The person concerned should continue to submit weekly medical certificates for the award of credits while they are unfit for work, and submit a final medical certificate when they are fit to resume employment.

Motor Insurance Regulation

43. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence (details supplied) concerning high insurance premia incurred by taxi drivers (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8985/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The provision of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered is a commercial matter for insurance companies and is based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept and adequate provisioning to meet those risks.

As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I, nor the Central Bank of Ireland, may interfere in the terms of provision of insurance products. The EU legislative framework for insurance expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing, or terms and conditions of an insurance product.

Insurance Ireland operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to obtaining insurance. In the event that a person is unable to obtain a quotation for motor insurance or feels that the premium proposed or the terms are so excessive that it amounts to a refusal to give them motor insurance, they should contact Insurance Ireland, 5 Harbourmaster Place, IFSC, Dublin 1, Telephone +353 1 6761820 quoting the Declined Cases Agreement.

Banking Sector Data

44. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance his views that a large number of individual properties (details supplied) are either vacant and attracting anti-social behaviour elements or have been let to tenants who are the cause of anti-social behaviour; the number of properties in these categories; and if he will direct the banks to allow for ownership details to be made available. [8832/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy will be aware that the governance of the relationship between residential tenants and residential landlords is primarily a matter for the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. In that regard, the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 provides the main regulatory framework for the private rented residential sector and prescribes the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants and the Private Residential Tenancies Board is responsible for the resolution of disputes between tenants and landlords.

I am informed by the Central Bank that there were 1,760 principal dwelling houses (PDH) properties and 668 buy-to-let (BTL) properties in the possession of banks at the end of December 2015. However neither the Central Bank nor my own Department collect information about the occupancy of properties with mortgages that are in arrears.

The Deputy will also be aware that relationship frameworks are in place with the State owned banks which provide that the State will not intervene in the day-to-day operations of the banks or their management decisions. These frameworks are required to ensure that the banks are run on a commercial, cost effective and independent basis to ensure the value of the banks as an asset for the State.

In conclusion I would remind the Deputy that the Government strategy to deal with Mortgage Arrears has developed and been enhanced over recent years and over time additional measures have been introduced as the nature and circumstances of those in arrears has evolved. Data released by the Central Bank shows that PDH arrears have declined for the last ten quarters. However, a significant number of borrowers remain in arrears of more than two years and in May of last year the Government announced a package of further measures to assist distressed borrowers.

To date a cross-Departmental approach, led by the Department of the Taoiseach, has been adopted to address the problem of mortgage arrears, encompassing supervisory oversight of financial institutions by the Central Bank, significant reform to personal insolvency legislation, State-funded access to expert financial and legal advice for borrowers in arrears on their family home, and availability of a mortgage-to-rent option to enable eligible borrowers to remain in their homes as local authority, or approved housing body, tenants.

Property Tax

45. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance to make a statement on the case of persons (details supplied) regarding property tax. [8845/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the person in question has consistently failed to meet her Local Property Tax (LPT) obligations and has not engaged with Revenue on the issue despite having numerous opportunities to do so. Due to the level of non-engagement, Revenue was left with no alternative but to start debt collection action to secure the outstanding liabilities.

On foot of the Deputy's Question Revenue again tried to make direct contact with the person to discuss the issue but could not reach her. I am aware that the Deputy's office has now agreed to contact the person to encourage her to discuss the situation with Revenue. I am assured that if the person makes contact every effort will be made to agree a mutually acceptable arrangement. This may include a phased payment arrangement or a deferral of the liability depending on the specific circumstances.

Credit Union Services

46. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the status of discussions with the Irish League of Credit Unions on its proposals to release funds for social housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8860/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government is the Department primarily responsible for the formulation and implementation of policy and the preparation of legislation in relation to housing.

My Department has received a number of different proposals from the Credit Union Development Association (CUDA) and from the Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU). Proposals from both representative bodies, in relation to the funding of social housing, are at various stages of development.

In respect of the ILCU proposal, I have been informed that Minister Alan Kelly and Minister of State Paudie Coffey at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government met with ILCU in December 2015 to discuss its proposal around funding of social housing developments. There have been a number of follow-up meetings between officials from my Department and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government to consider any potential regulatory or legislative implications of credit union becoming involved in social housing funding.

Two alternative models of funding were proposed by ILCU in relation to social housing and it was determined that the second of the two models would be best placed to achieve the objective of providing a mechanism for investment in social housing without negatively impacting on the General Government Balance, and keeping the funding 'off-balance sheet'. It was agreed that ILCU would progress the preferred model, with both Departments indicating their availability should any assistance be required regarding technical advice or further information.

The Registrar of Credit Unions at the Central Bank is the independent regulator of credit unions, and ultimately any decision around credit unions providing such funding would require regulatory approval prior to implementation.

The Government recognises the important role of credit unions as a volunteer co-operative movement in this country. The Government's priorities remain the protection of members' savings, the financial stability of credit unions and the sector overall and it is determined to support a strengthened and growing credit union movement.

House Prices

47. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the degree to which he monitors house property prices, with particular reference to the need to ensure that such prices do not become a major governing economic influence as in the past; and if he will make a state-

ment on the matter. [8922/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): According to the Central Statistics Office's Residential Property Price Index, the price of residential property increased by 0.3 per cent nationally between February and March. Over the month of March, property prices increased by 0.9 per cent in Dublin and decreased by 0.2 per cent outside of Dublin.

On an annual basis, national property prices increased by 7.4 per cent in March 2016, compared with annual growth of 16.8 per cent over the same period in 2015. The moderation in property price growth has been driven by price developments in Dublin. In the 12 months to March 2016, the growth in Dublin property prices was 3.9 per cent, compared with growth of 22.8 per cent over the same period in 2015.

I wish to assure the Deputy that my Department continues to monitor developments in the property market, including house prices. The Government remains committed to addressing the outstanding bottlenecks in the housing market. In this regard the 'Stabilising Rents and Boosting Supply' package, announced in November 2015, includes a number of measures to support sustainable growth in housing supply and provide greater stability in the rental market over the short run. The package of measures builds upon and complements the Government's overall strategic approach to addressing bottlenecks in the housing market as set out in 'Construction 2020: A Strategy for A Renewed Construction Sector'.

Credit Availability

48. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which he monitors credit needs in all aspects of the business sector, without exception; if he is satisfied that these needs are being fully met in line with economic requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8923/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware, small businesses play a central role in the sustainable recovery of the Irish economy. To facilitate this, Government policy is focused on ensuring that all viable SMEs have access to an appropriate supply of credit from a diverse range of bank and non-bank sources. Officials from my Department regularly meet representatives from the Small Firms Association, Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association and Chambers Ireland to discuss issues around access to finance.

AIB and Bank of Ireland are concentrating on growing their balance sheets. In this context, both banks recognise the need to increase business lending and have put on record their commitment to the SME sector. The most recent Department of Finance SME credit demand survey, covering the period April-September 2015, shows that 85% of SME credit applications, excluding pending applications, were approved. Further results from the survey can be found at www.finance.gov.ie.

My Department has been involved in a range of initiatives to encourage access to credit for small and medium sized businesses. The SME State Bodies Group provides a forum for the development and implementation of policy measures to enhance SMEs' access to a stable and appropriate supply of finance.

Some of the main policies introduced to encourage access to credit for small and medium businesses include:

- The Supporting SMEs Online Tool, a cross-government initiative, was launched in May 2014. On answering 8 simple questions, the small business will receive a list of available Gov-

ernment supports. The Supporting SMEs Online Tool is available at www.supportingsmes.ie.

- The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland has been established as a means of ensuring that SMEs are provided with sufficient finance for growth. The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) is an initiative designed to increase the availability of funding to SMEs at a lower cost and on more flexible terms than have recently been available on the Irish Market in recent times. The SBCI does not lend directly to SMEs. It uses a network of lending partners known as 'on lenders' to make its funds available to SMEs. More information on the SBCI can be found on www.sbc.gov.ie.

- The Credit Guarantee Scheme encourages additional lending to small businesses by offering a partial Government guarantee to banks against losses on qualifying loans to eligible SMEs.

- The Microenterprise Loan Fund, administered by Microfinance Ireland, provides support in the form of loans for up to €25,000, available to start-up, newly established, or growing micro enterprises employing less than 10 people, with viable business propositions. Microfinance Ireland works in partnership with the Local Enterprise Offices nationally to administer this fund (www.microfinanceireland.ie).

- The Credit Review Office helps SME or Farm borrowers who have had an application for credit of up to €3 million declined or reduced by the main banks, and who feel that they have a viable business proposition. They also examine cases where borrowers feel that the terms and conditions of their existing loan, or a new loan offer, are unfairly onerous or have been unreasonably changed to their detriment. This is a strictly confidential process between the business, the Credit Review Office and the bank. The Credit Reviewer and his team have overturned more than 50% of the refusals that have been appealed to the Office. Further details are available at www.creditreview.ie.

My Department and the Credit Review Office, working with the other relevant Departments and Agencies, will continue to monitor the availability of both bank and non-bank credit on both a macro and sectoral basis in order to ensure that sufficient access to finance is available to facilitate participants in the SME sector to reach their full potential in terms of growth and employment generation.

Motor Insurance Regulation

49. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the unreasonably high insurance premia for taxi drivers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8929/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The provision of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered is a commercial matter for insurance companies and is based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept and adequate provisioning to meet those risks.

As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I, nor the Central Bank of Ireland, may interfere in the terms of provision of insurance products. The EU framework for insurance expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing, or terms and conditions of an insurance product.

Insurance Ireland operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to obtaining insurance. In the event that a person is unable to obtain a quotation for motor insurance or feels that the premium proposed or the terms are so

excessive that it amounts to a refusal to give them motor insurance, they should contact Insurance Ireland, 5 Harbourmaster Place, IFSC, Dublin 1, Telephone +353 1 6761820 quoting the Declined Cases Agreement.

I would also like to add that my Department has commenced a Review of Policy in the Insurance Sector. This is being undertaken in consultation with the Central Bank, Departments and Agencies and other relevant stakeholders. The objective of the Review is to recommend measures to improve the functioning and regulation of the insurance sector. This Review will include an examination of the factors contributing to the cost of insurance.

Work on the Review will continue over the coming months and is expected to be completed by the end of this year. The final report will be presented to Government in due course.

Commercial Rates Calculations

50. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Finance the steps he is taking to replace the rates system and create a self-assessment system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8963/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have no responsibility for the valuation process within the context of the rates system. Such issues are a matter for the Valuation Office, which comes under the remit of the Department of Justice.

Mortgage Data

51. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 97 of 20 April 2016, if he is aware of the number and value of approved mortgages by banks (details supplied) that are outside the normal 80% cap for non-first-time buyers or the equivalent cap for first-time buyers under the Central Bank of Ireland's macro prudential lending rules to date; and to provide details for the respective banks, in tabular form. [8999/16]

52. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 97 of 20 April 2016, if he is not aware of the number and value of approved mortgages by banks (details supplied) that are outside the normal 80% cap for non-first-time buyers or the equivalent cap for first-time buyers under the Central Bank of Ireland's macro prudential lending rules to date; and if he is dealing with these figures. [9000/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 51 and 52 together.

As advised in answer to the Deputy's previous PQ, the macro-prudential limits on mortgage lending are designed, implemented and monitored by the Central Bank in its role as regulator of the Irish banking sector, and therefore fall outside of my remit as Minister for Finance. Moreover, the Central Bank does not provide prudential lending disclosures on an industry-wide or institutional basis and there is no regulatory requirement for Banks to publicly disclose the value of approved mortgages that are exceptions to the macro-prudential limits. My role as Minister of Finance, as set out in the Relationship Framework Agreements between the Minister and the banks in which the State is a shareholder, does not involve me in the relationship between the banks and their regulator. As such neither I nor my Department have a direct role in this matter.

In relation to PTSB, the Group had €459m of new mortgage lending in 2015, as set out

on page 8 of the Group's 2015 Financial Statements. I am further advised that the Group was compliant with the Central Bank of Ireland's macro prudential restrictions in the period up to December 2015 and that 11% of the qualifying loans were issued as LTV exemptions under the CBI macro prudential rules.

In relation to AIB, they had €1.7bn of new mortgage lending in Ireland in 2015, as set out on page 39 of its 2015 Financial Statements. While AIB does not disclose the specific detail requested, I have received assurances that the bank complied fully with Loan-to-Value (LTV) and Loan-to-Income (LTI) limits as set by the Central Bank of Ireland during the year to 31st December 2015, and that AIB continues to operate within the constraints set by its regulator.

Insurance Compensation Fund

53. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount paid by the State into the Insurance Compensation Fund for each of the past five years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9030/16]

54. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount paid to the State from the insurance levy for each of the past five years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9031/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 53 and 54 together.

The purpose of the Insurance Compensation Fund (ICF) is to provide a certain minimum level of protection for insurance policy holders should an insurance company go into liquidation. The Fund also allows insurance company administrators to apply to the High Court for funding where necessary in order to enable them to meet their financial obligations as they arise.

The Central Bank of Ireland has responsibility under Section 6 of the Insurance Act 1964 to carry out an annual assessment of the needs of the Fund and, where it is of the opinion that the state of the Fund is such that financial support should be provided for it, it is allowed to determine an appropriate contribution to be paid to the Fund by each insurer, or insurer authorised in another Member State, in relation to insured risks in the State.

Where there are insufficient funds available to enable payments out of the Fund to be made expeditiously, Section 5 of the Insurance Act 1964 allows the Minister for Finance to advance the necessary monies to the Fund in the form of a repayable loan, on the recommendation of the Central Bank. Such advances are subject to interest charges.

The ICF Levy is paid into the Insurance Compensation Fund. The following table sets out the amounts advanced from the Exchequer to the ICF and amounts repaid from the ICF to the Exchequer for the period 2011 to 2015. These payments are published in table 1.7 of the annual audited financial statements of the Exchequer (the Finance Accounts) which are available on www.finance.gov.ie.

ICF Payments from and refunds to the Exchequer

Year	Total amount issued from the Exchequer to the ICF	Total amount repaid to the Exchequer from the ICF	Total net amount issued from the Exchequer to the ICF/(received by Exchequer from ICF)
2011	€280.0 million	-	€280.0 million
2012	€455.5 million	-	€455.5 million

Year	Total amount issued from the Exchequer to the ICF	Total amount repaid to the Exchequer from the ICF	Total net amount issued from the Exchequer to the ICF/(received by Exchequer from ICF)
2013	€197.8 million	-	€197.8 million
2014	-	€100 million	(€100.0 million)
2015	€79.0 million	€100 million	(€21.0 million)

The following table sets out the amount of the ICF levy received in the years 2011 to 2015. The levy is set by the Central Bank at a current rate of 2% of gross written non-life insurance premiums received in respect of risk in the State.

There are no ICF levy payments recorded in the table for 2011, as the levy was re-introduced in January 2012.

Total ICF levy received

Year	Total levy received by the ICF
2011	-
2012	€45,565,922.16
2013	€64,637,003.01
2014	€65,669,623.35
2015	€70,741,870.17

These figures, which are submitted to me annually by the Accountant of the Courts of Justice, are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and published annually on my Department's website in the annual Report on the Administration of the Insurance Compensation Fund.

Insurance Industry Regulation

55. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of fees paid to the administrators of a company (details supplied) for each of the years since it went into administration, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9032/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In 2010, Joint Administrators were appointed by the High Court, at the request of the Central Bank of Ireland, because of concerns about the solvency position of Quinn Insurance Limited (QIL).

The following table sets out the total fees and costs incurred by the Joint Administrators of QIL for the period 2010 to 2015.

All amounts paid to the Joint Administrators are submitted to and approved by the President of the High Court.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
€'000	5,637	7,533	2,668	2,852	1,105	841

The overall reduction in the fees since 2011 reflects the sale of assets and portfolio transfer.

Insurance Levy

56. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount raised from the levies on insurance policies in each of the years 2011 to 2015, in tabular form; if the figures reflect both the gross receipts and the net receipts, less the cost and expenses of the Office of the

Revenue Commissioners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9033/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The following table sets out the amounts collected in respect of the various types of insurance related levies for the years requested by the Deputy.

The nature of the stamp duty levies are such that the insurance company calculates the levy by reference to the value of the premiums paid on those policies (or in the case of the Health Insurance Levy by reference to the number of persons insured under a policy) which fall within the definition of insurance policy for the purposes of a particular levy. Therefore, there are no gross or net receipts, as the amount to be paid has to represent the company's full liability to the levy for the period. Of course, from time to time errors are made which result in refunds, off-sets and additional payments being made, but it not considered that such adjustments are relevant to the question.

Because Revenue operates its tax collection systems at an integrated customer level it does not measure the cost of collection at individual 'taxhead' level.

Description	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
Insurance Policies	2.5	1.8	2.5	2.0	2.2
Non-Life Insurance Levy	106.4	104.2	98.7	103.4	108.0
Life Assurance Levy	32.0	24.1	25.0	27.6	31.0
Health Insurance Levy	347.0	436.8	172.6	-0.2	-3.3

Social and Affordable Housing Funding

57. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Finance the borrowing restrictions in place for local authorities which wish to borrow money to exceed the social housing new build targets, as outlined in his Housing Strategy. [9042/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): This is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr. Alan Kelly T.D. However I would draw the Deputy's attention to the Protocol for the control and monitoring of local authorities contribution to the General Government Balance included as Annex 4 of the Medium Term Budgetary Framework, which was published by my Department in July 2014.

The Protocol between the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform covers capital account controls, control of non-mortgage borrowing and overdrafts.

Mortgage Lending

58. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the Consumer Credit Act 1995, in particular Part 9 of this Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9059/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Section 129 of the Consumer Credit Act provides that a notice, in the form as prescribed in that Act, shall be contained on the front page of a housing loan agreement which falls within the scope of that Act. Accordingly, it will be a requirement for relevant creditors to comply with the terms of section 129, along with the

other relevant sections of the Consumer Credit Act. However, as the Deputy will appreciate, it would not be appropriate for me as Minister for Finance to provide detailed advice or commentary to any third party on the interpretation of that section, or indeed of any other statutory provision or on the terms of any individual credit agreement to which I am not a party. If an individual has a concern regarding a regulated financial service provider's compliance with the provisions of section 129 or with the terms of a credit contract such an entity has entered into, such a matter should be raised with the regulated institution in the first instance. If the matter has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the person then the matter can be raised with the independent Financial Services Ombudsman. Ultimately, of course, it is a matter for the Courts to interpret legislation and also to adjudicate on contractual disputes between the parties to a credit agreement.

However, the Deputy may also wish to note that, following the transposition of the Mortgage Credit Directive into Irish law by means of the European Union (Consumer Mortgage Credit Agreements) Regulations 2016 (SI 142/2016), in respect of new credit agreements which fall within the scope of those Regulations the provisions of section 129 of the Consumer Credit Act no longer apply. Instead the detailed pre-contractual information which a creditor is now obliged to provide to a consumer borrower in respect of such credit agreements is set out in the European Standardised Information Sheet (ESIS) as provided for in Schedule 2 of those Regulations. This ESIS document is a mandatory requirement of the Mortgage Credit Directive. The Regulations provide that the ESIS shall be provided to the consumer at the binding offer of credit stage and shall be accompanied by a copy of the draft credit agreement. The consumer will then have a thirty day reflection period to consider whether or not to accept the offer of credit.

Fiscal Data

59. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the details of the fiscal space available for each of the next five years, in tabular form, given the 2016 stability programme update. [9089/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The preparation of the Stability Programme Update April 2016 (SPU) was a necessary step to ensure compliance with requirements under the European Semester. The technical estimates provided illustrate the macro-fiscal outlook over the medium term on a no policy change basis relative to Budget 2016. These estimates form a necessary mid-year input to the Semester process and must be provided ahead of formulating Budget 2017 when active policy decisions will be taken. Estimates of fiscal space were not published in the document as it is submitted on a no policy change basis.

Having said that I announced last Wednesday in this House that the estimated net fiscal space was of the order of €10-€11 billion over the period 2017 to 2021. I also announced that there would be approximately €900 million of net fiscal space available in 2017. I stressed that both of these estimates are work-in-progress and subject to change; the calculations require inputs from the European Commission and these should be available shortly.

At Budget time, my Department estimated a figure of €8½ billion net fiscal space for the period 2017 to 2021. This was based on achieving a medium term budgetary objective or MTO of 0% of GDP by 2019. As I made clear in a statement earlier this year, any relaxation of the MTO would add around €1½ billion to this figure; the MTO has now been revised.

The remainder of the difference between the net fiscal space estimates provided in Budget 2016 and now is accounted for by other moving parts driving the estimation of the expenditure

benchmark rule. These factors include a higher GDP deflator, a stronger rate of potential GDP growth and a lower convergence margin relative to Budget time.

Finally, in response to a request from the Deputy last Wednesday I also said that my officials would be available to discuss technical issues related to the SPU; I understand that the Deputy has since been in contact with my officials and a meeting arranged.

Property Tax Administration

60. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance why a person (details supplied) was issued with correspondence detailing the local property tax owing in respect of a local authority property owned by Donegal County Council; why a sum of €111.96 was subsequently deducted from this person's employment pension; how the person's personal public service number was obtained in this instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9112/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Revenue that a key aspect of the work undertaken during the implementation of Local Property Tax (LPT) was the development of a comprehensive Register of residential properties in the State. The Register was developed using data drawn from a range of sources including Revenue's own records.

Given the scale of the task it was inevitable that a relatively small number of property records would be incorrectly associated with specific individuals. Where such errors occurred tax payers were advised to contact Revenue as soon as possible to have the record amended.

Regarding the case to which the Deputy is referring, the person in question was incorrectly linked as the liable person to the Local Authority property during the development of the Property Register. The link was created on foot of data extracted from her PAYE records. Revenue was not made aware of the 'liable person' error or any change of address for the person over the intervening years. As a consequence LPT correspondence, including a notification of deduction at source from her occupational pension in respect of the 2013 liability, continued to issue to her.

In September 2015 Revenue became aware of a change of address for the person and that her PPSN was amended from an old format number to a new number. Revenue amended her information on the Register, which resulted in her receiving LPT correspondence to her new address. It was on foot of this correspondence that the Deputy's office made contact with the LPT team on her behalf.

As soon as it was verified that the person was not the 'liable person' in respect of the property Revenue updated the Property Register to reflect the correct situation and recently refunded €111.96, which was deducted from her occupational pension, to her.

Property Tax Exemptions

61. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Finance if there is an exemption for elderly persons over 75 years of age who are in poor health and who suffer from a disability but who have not paid their property tax, where they applied for a disabled person grant to their local authority but where they were refused unless they could show evidence of complying with the property tax scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9185/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by Revenue that while there is no specific exemption from LPT for persons over 75 years of age, Section 10B of the

LPT Act provides for a full exemption from LPT for properties occupied by individuals who are permanently and totally incapacitated to such an extent that they are unable to maintain themselves or to earn a living from any kind of work. The exemption only applies where the cost of the adaptation work exceeds 25% of the market value of the property before it was adapted.

Also, Section 15A of the LPT Act provides for a reduction in the market value by one valuation band where the property has been adapted for occupation by a disabled person, where the adaptation has been grant-aided or approved for grant aid by a local authority and where the adaptation increases the market value of the property. The person with the disability must occupy the property as his/her sole or main residence after the adaptation is completed.

The LPT Act also provides for a system of deferral and partial deferral arrangements where there is inability to pay and where certain specified conditions exist. It is important to note that deferral/partial deferral is not an exemption and attaches as a charge on the property until the liability is paid. The deferral/partial deferral option also attracts an annual interest charge of 4%.

Revenue has confirmed that it is aware of the specific case to which the Deputy is referring and has made a number of unsuccessful efforts to contact the person concerned. Once contact is established with the person or the person's representative Revenue will provide all the relevant information and support on the various options available to assist the person to meet his/her LPT obligations.

Heritage Sites

62. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of a tourist property (details supplied) that needs to be opened for a longer length of time in the summer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8818/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): A key-holding arrangement is in place at Carrigafoyle Castle, Co. Kerry and this year access for the public is being facilitated from 1 May to 30 September, a total of five months. It is considered that this will adequately facilitate any summer and early autumn visitors who wish to visit the site.

It is not considered advisable to extend opening arrangements later in the year because of the Health and Safety risk at this unattended site, as underfoot conditions would, in all probability, be significantly compromised by the greater likelihood of poor weather at that time.

Revenue Commissioners Staff

63. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of requests the Revenue Commissioners submitted in 2015 and in 2016 to date seeking permission to employ additional staff; the number of these he approved, refused and that are pending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8867/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Following the 2015 Estimates process, the Revenue Commissioners' multi-annual budget 2015-2017 provided for an average annual whole time staff equivalent of 5,874.

As part of the 2016 Estimates process the Revenue Commissioners sought to increase its staff resource to confront non-compliance by 50 whole time equivalent in order to increase the tax and duty yield from compliance interventions. Following the 2016 Estimates process the

Revenue Commissioners' multi-annual budget was increased to provide for an average annual whole time staff equivalent of 5,924, an increase of 50 on the 2015 provision.

The Office of the Revenue Commissioners currently has a total permanent whole time equivalent serving staff level of 5,891.

My Department has not received any requests from the Revenue Commissioners in relation to the 2017 Estimates of Expenditure process to date in 2016.

Flood Risk Management

64. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to hold a meeting between all stakeholders, including concerned residents, connected to the River Shannon flood problems; the proposed date and location for same; and if it will occur after the catchment flood risk assessment and management report has issued. [8815/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The core strategy for addressing the significant flood risks nationally, and in the Shannon River Basin District generally, is the Office of Public Works' (OPW) Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. There are 66 locations in the Shannon River Basin District and 300 locations nationwide that are being assessed under the Programme, the purpose of which is to implement the EU Floods Directive and national flood policy.

The Programme, which is being undertaken by engineering consultants on behalf of the OPW working in partnership with the local authorities, involves the production of predictive flood mapping for each location, the development of preliminary flood risk management options and the production of flood risk management plans. The draft maps are being finalised following the conclusion of the national statutory public consultation process on 23rd December, 2015. This statutory consultation followed 64 Public Consultation Days on the Draft Flood Maps for the Shannon region that were held between 23 October, 2013 and 15 April 2015.

In addition, 55 Public Consultation Days on preliminary options to manage flood risk on the Shannon Catchment were held between 30 September 2015 and 11 February 2016.

Following the finalisation of the flood mapping and the identification of preliminary flood risk management options, the final output from this important project will be integrated Flood Risk Management Plans containing specific measures to address in a comprehensive and sustainable way the significant flood risks identified in the Shannon River Basin District. The CFRAM Programme will be used to determine national priorities for future State investment in flood defences.

In addition to the CFRAM, the Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group which was established to enhance on-going co-operation across all of the State Agencies involved with the River Shannon has conducted an audit of the roles and responsibilities of State Agency organisations and has published its Shannon Flood Risk Work Programme for 2016, which is available from the OPW website, www.opw.ie. The Group is holding the first of three public Open Days in the Athlone Civic Buildings on Thursday 5 May 2016.

Office of Public Works Properties

65. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if

he will examine a request (details supplied) to use a closed Office of Public Works property; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8849/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The 2012 and 2013 policing plans for An Garda Síochána identified 139 Garda stations for closure. Many of these properties reverted to the Office of Public Works (OPW) to identify an alternative State use or manage their disposal.

The policy of the Office of Public Works (OPW) with regard to non-operational (vacant) Garda Stations is to:

1. Identify if the property is required/suitable for alternative State use by Government departments or the wider public sector.

2. If there is no other State use identified for a property, the OPW will then consider disposing of the property on the open market if and when conditions prevail, in order to generate revenue for the Exchequer.

3. If no State requirement is identified or if a decision is taken not to dispose of a particular property the OPW may consider community involvement (subject to detailed written submission which would indicate that the community/voluntary group has the financial means to insure, maintain and manage the property and that there are no ongoing costs for the Exchequer).

I am advised by the Commissioners of Public Works that they are currently assessing the options for the former Garda Station at Ballylongford in line with the above policy. On completion of this process a decision will be taken as to the future use of the property.

Public Sector Staff Remuneration

66. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of acting-up payments he has put in place since the lifting of the moratorium in 2015; the reason Civil Servants and Public Servants have not received payments for 84 days, given that the moratorium is over; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8877/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The position with acting up payments is that the granting of such payments was only considered on an exceptional basis during the period of the moratorium. While the moratorium has been relaxed to provide additional staff to support the delivery of front line services, the conditions enabling the payment of such payments remain the same i.e. it is generally necessary for a person to be in an acting up position for a period of 84 days before such payments become payable. However, where a person reaches the threshold of 84 days in an acting up position they receive payment for that 84 day period in addition to payment for any further period in that position.

As acting up payments are employed based on the individual operational business unit needs across all sectors of the public service, the data on such payments sought by the Deputy is not available to my Department.

State Properties Data

67. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question Number 138 of 14 April 2016, the length of time each of the sites listed has been vacant. [8895/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): I am advised by the Commissioners of Public Works that the information sought by the Deputy is currently being collated. A detailed response will issue directly to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

As soon as the data is collated it is proposed to issue the detailed responses to PQ 8895 and PQ 8459 simultaneously.

Public Sector Staff Increments

68. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of public sector employees who are members of trade unions which have not signed up to the Lansdowne Road agreement receiving pay increments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8990/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question Reference No. 8080/16 on 26 April, 2016.

Coastal Erosion

69. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of coastal erosion at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9015/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): It is a matter in the first instance for Kerry County Council (KCC) to identify, investigate and address priority areas of its coastline considered to be under significant threat from erosion. It is open to KCC to undertake coastal erosion remedial works using its own resources. If necessary, it may also put forward proposals to the relevant central Government Departments for funding of appropriate measures depending on the infrastructure or assets under threat. The Office of Public Works (OPW) operates a Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, under which applications from local authorities are considered for measures costing not more than €500,000 in each instance. Funding for coastal erosion risk management studies may also be applied for under this scheme. Funding of up to 90% of the cost is available for projects which meet the eligibility criteria including a requirement that the proposed measures are cost beneficial. Full details are available on the OPW's website at: <http://www.opw.ie/en/floodriskmanagement/operations/minorfloodworkscoastalprotectionscheme/>.

No application from KCC has to date, been received, for the location specified.

Flood Relief Schemes Funding

70. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding flood damage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9063/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): I refer to my reply to the previous question on this same matter answered on 14 April 2016. Dublin City Council (DCC) was the Contracting Authority for the works carried out in the Clanmoyle Estate with funding provided by the Office of Public Works (OPW).

It is for DCC as the Contracting Authority in the first instance to consider this matter and the Council has informed the OPW that it is liaising with the residents concerned in this regard. Residents can contact Mr. Alan O'Regan at alan.oregan@dublincity.ie in relation to any queries/concerns they have concerning property damage.

Government Expenditure

71. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Departments that are facing spending pressures over the next five years; the monetary value of these pressures; and how they will impact on the fiscal space, in tabular form, given the 2016 stability programme which states that while his Department will do everything possible to maintain expenditure within existing allocations, it is likely that over the course of the year, voted spending pressures amounting to circa 0.25% of gross domestic product could materialise. [9088/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As outlined in the 2016 Stability Programme Update (SPU) it is currently estimated on the technical no policy change basis on which the SPU was prepared that over the course of the year, voted spending pressures amounting to c. ¼ per cent of GDP could materialise while, at the same time, there is potential upside to the revenue projections. As stated in the SPU It is envisaged that this level of spending pressure in 2016 can be accommodated within the fiscal rules.

At this stage of the year, the amounts of spending pressures by Department cannot be accurately assessed. However, the end-March Exchequer Returns provide some indications of areas where there may be some pressures. As outlined in the analysis of Gross Voted Expenditure published with the Exchequer Returns, at the end of the first quarter, Health gross current spending was over profile by €38 million (1.1%). This would indicate that there is a risk that Health may exceed the allocation set out in the Revised Estimates for Public Services (REV) 2016.

Following the flooding in late 2015 and the early part of this year, it is estimated that an additional allocation for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will be required this year to enable necessary recovery and repair work on transport infrastructure.

While not evident in the end quarter Exchequer returns, it can be anticipated that Departments will have demands for additional resources. These demands can arise in relation to both current and capital expenditure. For example, in the Education sector, re-phasing of funding for the school building programme to 2016 would allow earlier completion of some projects.

It should also be noted that the aggregate level of spending pressures may be somewhat mitigated by savings across Government Departments that can emerge later in the year.

The estimates of fiscal space for the period 2017-2021 set out in Table A.9 of the Department of Finance's Budget 2016 publication sets out the walk between the gross fiscal space consistent with the forecast Expenditure Benchmark and the net fiscal space available over the medium term estimated at Budget time in October 2015 that after taking account, in relation to Voted expenditure, of:

- projected expenditure pressures in Health, Education and Social Protection arising from demographics;
- projected additional expenditure in Agriculture arising from the roll-out of the Rural Development Programme;

- the projected carry over impact of certain Budget 2016 measures;
- the capital expenditure increases in the Public Capital Plan; and
- savings arising from expected lower numbers on the Live Register.

Given that the fiscal space in Table A.9 of the Budget book is calculated by reference to the Expenditure Benchmark estimated in October 2015, additional expenditure in 2016 may become part of the base expenditure for 2017 and consequently should not be expected to impact on the fiscal space available for subsequent years. However, as outlined above, expenditure pressures in 2016 may arise on both current and capital expenditure, and, given the favourable treatment of capital formation increases under the Expenditure Benchmark, any impacts on fiscal space can only be fully assessed when the full details of any additional expenditure in 2016 are available and also in light of consideration of the impact of the General Government Finance statistics for 2015 recently published by the CSO on updated estimates of fiscal space for 2017.

Insurance Coverage

72. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to clarify the issue of meetings held over the winter with representatives of the insurance industry; if he has reached agreement on home owners being refused flood cover because of the perceived threat of flooding; if he will advise residents accordingly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9172/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris): The Office of Public Works (OPW) has no role or function in relation to the oversight or regulation of insurance matters. The provision of insurance cover, the level of premiums charged and the policy terms applied are matters for individual insurers.

As I informed the Deputy in reply to his question on 14 April last on this subject, the Taoiseach, Tanaiste and other Ministers, including myself, met the CEOs of the insurance industry on 12 January of this year to communicate the benefits of flood defence schemes carried out by the Office of Public Works and to discuss the provision of flood insurance in areas protected by flood defence schemes. Subsequently, Insurance Ireland, the representative body for the insurance industry, advised that approximately 98% of property insurance policies nationally include flood cover and that in areas protected by flood defence schemes constructed by the Office of Public Works (OPW), 83% of policies include flood cover. Insurance Ireland advised that the rate of cover is 89% in areas protected by fixed defences and 78% where the protection includes demountable defences. Demountable defences are used in four of the sixteen schemes that have been completed to the 1:100 year standard, required by the industry. A further meeting of the OPW/Insurance Ireland Working Group on flood insurance (which also includes the Department of Finance) took place on 7 March, and a further meeting is scheduled for June.

The subject of insurance against the risk of flooding is one of the issues being considered by the Inter-Departmental Committee which is developing whole-of-Government policies to support the OPW Flood Risk Management Plans. In this context, officials of the Department of Finance are undertaking research in the area of flood insurance which will include an analysis of the different approaches to flood insurance taken in other countries. This will then feed into a report from the Committee to Government which is expected to be completed before the summer.

EU Funding

73. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which European Union grant support continues to be made available to indigenous companies in the manufacturing and services sectors in respect of innovation and technology in the past four years; the extent to which such support is expected to continue in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8924/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The availability of European research and innovation programmes provides Ireland with valuable mechanisms for firms - indigenous and multinational - to engage in high-level international research to further their innovativeness and competitiveness. These programmes are also a critical source of non-Exchequer funding for this important economic activity. The current EU Framework Programme for research and innovation, which is part of the drive to create new growth and jobs in Europe, is Horizon 2020. Horizon 2020 has a budget of almost €75 billion and runs over the period 2014-2020. Irish companies who compete successfully for funding from Horizon 2020 will boost their innovative capability and competitiveness which in turn this will deliver strong national economic impacts.

In the first 23 months of Horizon 2020, 588 Irish applicants were successful in securing funding. For this period, Ireland's drawdown was €251 million, giving an overall Irish success rate of 14.62% (higher than the EU Member State average of 13.5%). Of this funding, over €72 million went to companies and €52 million of the €72 million went to SMEs.

Of the €251 million drawdown, over €9 million was for advanced manufacturing and processing. It is not possible to disaggregate the total figure for supports for the manufacturing and services sectors as they are included in other calls, such as the SME Instrument.

Ireland performed excellently in the previous Framework Programme, FP7, which ran over the period 2007- 2013. Ireland's total drawdown in FP7 was €625 million. Of this funding, industry had a drawdown of €164 million and 72% of the industry total (€118.5 million) was drawn down by SMEs. The total figure for supports in the manufacturing and services sectors cannot be disaggregated from the total FP7 drawdown.

Ireland has an ambitious target of winning €1.25 billion under Horizon 2020, which we are on target to meet. Our strategy to achieve this target is being driven by the Horizon 2020 High Level Group, chaired by my Department. All Departments and Agencies engaged in research funding are represented on the High Level Group and particular attention is being given to maximising industry participation in Horizon 2020.

80% of the Horizon 2020 budget (€61 billion) is to be allocated between 2016 and 2020, which gives Irish companies the opportunity to continue to availing of these supports. Irish academics and companies will continue to be supported in their engagement with the opportunities available by the Horizon 2020 National Support System. The National Support System is coordinated by Enterprise Ireland and the National Director for Horizon 2020 leads a team comprised of representatives across the research funding departments and agencies.

Small and Medium Enterprises Supports

74. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on the extent to which lack of working capital continues to be identified by indigenous small enterprises in the manufacturing sector and in the services sector as an obstacle to expan-

sion; the degree to which he has brought these issues to the attention of the relevant authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8925/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Over the last five years the Government has worked tirelessly to ensure that the access of SMEs to an appropriate supply of financing from both bank and non-bank sources is improved and that all businesses have access to appropriate sources of finance to grow develop and expand. A number of key policy and legislative initiatives were developed and delivered since March 2011 with some being reviewed and amended as necessary, and these may be grouped as follows:-

Credit Guarantees

- The Credit Guarantee Act 2012, and Schemes made thereunder, have resulted in encouragement of bank lending to Irish SMEs to both create new jobs and protect existing ones. To date approx. €50 million of loans have been sanctioned in more than 300 facilities, and some 2200 jobs were created/maintained;

- The 2012 Act was reviewed in 2014-2015, and, in February of this year, the Credit Guarantee (Amendment) Act, 2016 was enacted. New Schemes are currently being drafted to extend the remit of credit guarantees (covering expanded forms of lending, and greater risk sharing), and introduce new counter guarantees to enhance the provision of both State and EU-sourced finance for Irish SMEs;

Microfinance Ireland (MFI)

- The Microenterprise Loan Fund Act, 2012 established MFI to provide loans of up to €25,000 to Irish micro-enterprises. To date approx. €13 million was been loaned to 870 firms, with more than 2000 jobs being created/maintained.

- As with credit guarantees, the operation of MFI was reviewed in 2015, and a number of changes were made to ease access to loans primarily, via the removal of the previous pre-requisite of a bank loan rejection. The legislative changes have resulted in a substantial increase in the activities both nationally and regionally in the last year and a half.

Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI)

- The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland Act 2014 established the SBCI, and tasked it to provide up to €800m of funds for Irish SMEs previously over reliant on bank financing. This tranche of funding has now been fully committed to business.

Prompt Payments Code (PPC)

- In May 2015, the Government launched the PPC to encourage and promote best practice between businesses and suppliers and improve cash flow for businesses and, ultimately, drive a change in the payment culture in Ireland.

Credit Review Office

- The Credit Review Office continues to review applications for credit made by SMEs or Farm borrowers with viable business propositions who have had an application for credit of up to €3 million declined or reduced by either Bank of Ireland, Allied Irish Bank or Ulster Bank.

- The Credit Review Office also examines cases where borrowers feel that the terms and conditions of their existing loans, or a new loan offer, are unfairly onerous or have been unreasonably changed to their detriment.

4 May 2016

My Department Officials continue to work with other Departmental and Agency officials through the State Bodies Group chaired by the Department of Finance to ensure appropriate financing options are available to SMEs, and are currently continuing to work on developing an export finance strategy with the objective of delivering a product to market this year in line with commitments in the Action Plan for Jobs 2016 in this area. In addition work is continuing on implementing a full range of actions in the finance for growth arena detailed in Chapter 7 of the Action Plan for Jobs 2016.

The Government will continuously monitor the availability of credit to our SMEs to ensure that our SMEs are well positioned to grow further in our recovering economy and continue to create further jobs.

Job Creation

75. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation when the promised 50 jobs that were announced for Roscommon town in autumn 2015 will be created. [9156/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): In June 2015, together with IDA Ireland, I was delighted to welcome plans by Moss Vision to establish a facility in Roscommon town to manufacture ophthalmic products. The facility will also act as a sales, marketing and distribution centre for the company's European operations. The job target is for 50 positions to be created over a seven year period. There are currently six people employed by the company in Roscommon, with further positions expected to be filled this year. I understand as well that production is planned to begin at the facility later this summer and that more hiring will take place thereafter, in line with the company's business and production requirements.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

76. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to review a penalty imposed on a person (details supplied) in respect of land issues. [8814/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (Satellite) inspections be completed to confirm eligibility under the schemes.

The 2014 Single Farm Payment/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application of the person named was selected for a remote sensing inspection. This inspection identified discrepancies between the area declared and the area determined resulting in an over-declaration in area of greater than 50%. Based on the terms and conditions of the scheme this resulted in no payment being due under the 2014 Single Payment Scheme and the application of an administrative fine to be offset against any future EU payments. The person named was notified of this decision on 19 November 2015.

The person named sought a review of the inspection findings and a field visit was arranged to verify the eligibility of the land on the ground. This field visit, while reducing the ineligible area, resulted in an over-declaration in area of greater than 20%, which under the terms and conditions of the scheme resulted in no payment being due under the 2014 Single Payment Scheme to the person named. My Department will shortly notify the person named of the outcome of

this review and of their right to seek a further review of the inspection decision.

In the event that the person named is dissatisfied with the outcome of any such further review the decision can be appealed to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within 3 months.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

77. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to expedite the approval of an application by a person (details supplied) under the targeted agricultural modernisation scheme 2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8816/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The applicant in question applied for a meal bin and feeders in the Dairy Investment Scheme in TAMS II Tranche one, and for a bulk tank, also in the Dairy Investment Scheme and a slatted shed and tank in the Animal Welfare, Safety and Nutrient Storage Scheme under separate applications in Tranche two. The applications for both tranches in the Dairy Investment Scheme have passed the administration checks and approval in respect of the investments applied for in Tranche one will be issuing in a matter of weeks. The application under the Animal Welfare, Safety and Nutrient Storage Scheme has to be examined. All of the applications submitted in Tranche two have to be examined and ranked and selected before the approval process can commence.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

78. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a payment to a person (details supplied) under the 2015 disadvantaged areas scheme. [8841/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes was received from the person named on 29 May 2015. Processing of the application has recently been finalised and payment will issue to the nominated bank account of the person named shortly.

Young Farmers Scheme

79. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the young farmers scheme; the reason for the delay; the decision date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8844/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted applications to my Department under the 'young farmer' category of the 2015 National Reserve and under the Young Farmers Scheme. The processing of these applications involves administrative and on farm checks and verification of land details submitted under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme application. These checks are required under the EU Regulations pertaining to the scheme. All such checks are currently being finalised and payment under the National Reserve and Young farmer scheme will issue to the person named shortly.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

80. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) will receive payment under the 2015 basic payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8848/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person name submitted a Transfer of Entitlements Allocation Right and Reference Value and Private Contract Clause application to my Department. A Basic Payment Scheme application which was required to facilitate these applications was submitted after the closing date along with an appeal to have it accepted on Force Majeure grounds. This appeal has now been considered and has been deemed successful. Payments relating to the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme applications of the person named will issue shortly.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

81. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a payment to a person (details supplied) under the 2015 basic payment scheme. [8899/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 18 November 2015. The late application penalty was not applied in this case as application related correspondence had been received by the Department within the application period.

EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue. The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection was finalised and payment due under the 2015 Basic Payment scheme issued to the nominated bank account of the person named on 4 February 2016.

Payment due under the 2015 Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme is now being processed and will issue to the nominated bank account of the person named shortly.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

82. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to persons (details supplied) under the national reserve scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8952/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The persons named submitted applications under the 2015 National Reserve and Young Farmers Scheme. In submitting the applications the persons named applied for both the 'new entrant' and 'young farmer' categories of the National Reserve. The applications under the 'young farmer' category of the National Reserve and the Young Farmers Scheme have not been successful as the applicant does not meet the age criteria for these schemes.

My Department has now examined the application under the 'new entrant' category of the National Reserve and deemed it to be successful. This application is being finalised and payment will issue shortly.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Eligibility

83. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) will receive payment under the 2015 agri-environment options scheme 2015; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8954/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced their AEOS contract on 1 September 2011 and was paid for the 2011 to 2014 Scheme years.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. The application of the person named was also selected for an on-farm inspection which took place on the 19 August 2015. During this inspection non-compliances with the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme were noted in relation to the taking of soil samples. This has resulted in the rejection of the AEOS application. The person named was notified of this by letter dated 19 November 2015. This letter also granted the right of appeal to the Agriculture Appeals Office within three months of the date of the letter. The Agriculture Appeals Office have advised that no appeal has been submitted.

Afforestation Programme

84. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason persons (details supplied) were refused a forestry payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8995/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The contract number provided by the Deputy refers to an application for approval to plant under the Afforestation Scheme. This application was refused due to landscape considerations and access to the site. Planting of this land would create unacceptable future road safety issues with regard to site access arrangements and minimum sightlines at the location.

Harbours and Piers

85. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a designation of a pier (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9025/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The issue of designation of Renard pier for landings of hake has been under discussion over the past months involving the SFPA which is responsible for operational issues concerning sea fisheries control, the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association and the operator concerned. I have now been advised by the SFPA that it can recommend that Renard Pier be designated for landings of Hake greater than 2 tonnes in accordance with the EU Control Regulation and the EU Hake Regulation. The SFPA is also recommending that due account be given to the necessity to complete the construction works at Renard to allow safe access to both fishing vessels and SFPA inspection personnel while monitoring to landings of Hake greater than 2 tonnes into Renard by European Union fishing vessels.

At present Renard Pier is under construction and a safety assessment will have to be made

on completion of the works. I plan to designate Renard pier as early as possible after I have received confirmation that the construction work on the pier is completed and a safety assessment confirms that the pier allows safe access to both fishing vessels and SFPA inspection personnel.

GLAS Payments

86. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason payment is issuing to a herd number that is dormant (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9047/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Records in my Department show that in 2015 the person named submitted his Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) application under the second herd number cited which is active and assigned to him. The first herd number cited is also assigned to the person named but no 2015 BPS application was submitted under this number.

A GLAS application was subsequently submitted on 12 December 2015 under Tranche 2 and again under the second herd number cited. The person named has been approved into GLAS with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016. Payment under his GLAS contract will issue in the final quarter of the year when all necessary pre-payment checks have been carried out.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

87. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied) in regard to the basic payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9050/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 29 April 2015. 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 inspection. The inspection identified discrepancies between the areas declared and the area found resulting in an over-declaration in area of greater than 50%. Based on the terms and conditions of the schemes this resulted in no payments being due under the 2015 Direct Payments Scheme and the application of an administrative fine to be offset against any future EU payments.

The person named was notified of the inspection outcome on 16 November 2015 and has appealed this decision. This request is currently being examined and 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 this review, the decision can be appealed to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within 3 months.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

88. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a farm improvement grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9054/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The applicant in question has applied for a race, shed and tank in the Animal Welfare, Safety and Nutrient Storage Scheme in the first tranche of TAMS II. The application has passed the administrative checks and approvals will be commencing in a matter of weeks.

Harbours and Piers Development

89. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of plans for Howth Harbour in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9058/16]

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

While first and foremost a working fishery harbour, Howth, similar to the other five Fishery Harbour Centres, has its own unique features and is home to a broad range of diverse economic and social activities.

My Department is conscious of the importance of both fishing and non-fishing activities in Howth and endeavours to facilitate and develop both. This involves day to day operational support by Harbour staff and management and development and repair of infrastructure subject to available financial resources. I am happy to advise the Deputy that, notwithstanding the prevailing economic environment in which we operate, in excess of €5.9 million has been invested in maintenance, development and upgrading works at Howth FHC as part of my Department's Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme from 2011 to 2015.

On 11th January I announced funding of €1.45 million for capital projects at Howth Fishery Harbour Centre during 2016; in addition I have set aside €420,000 for safety and maintenance, disability access and contractual commitments accruing from 2015. Significant works in this year's programme include the continued upgrading of the electrical system, provision of pontoons to west pier for ferry landings and traffic management works. Of importance in the context of a possible future dredging project at Howth is the allocation of €100,000 for the preparation of a Dumping at Sea Licence which will be required before any dredging project could commence.

A draft report from a €150,000 site investigation project which was commissioned in 2015 was received in March 2016. The draft report is being assessed by the Department's engineers. This report includes vital information on the nature of the material to be dredged in any future dredging project. This information is necessary for the preparation of the Dumping at Sea licence which will be submitted to the EPA in due course. Depending on the outcome of this process Dredging Works will be considered subject to available funding.

As the Deputy is aware, all developments in the six Fishery Harbour Centres, including a possible future dredging project at Howth Fishery Harbour Centre will be considered under future Capital Programmes on the basis of available exchequer funding and competing priorities.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

90. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to issue payment to a person (details supplied) under the basic payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9061/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) was received from the person named on 17 April 2015. Payment due under the BPS issued in February to the nominated bank account of the person named. A final balancing payment will issue over the coming weeks when the definitive value of entitlements has been established.

Trade Agreements

91. **Deputy Michael Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will oppose the proposed deal between the European Union and the South American Mercosur trade bloc to allow thousands of tons of cheap South American beef into the European Union; his views on the effectiveness of the regulations governing traceability and inspections regarding health and safety over the past 30 years; on the system in place in South America; if he will assure the public that public health and safety will not be put at risk because of the importation of this beef; if the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Phil Hogan, will be of help in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9069/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have been very active in recent months in highlighting the potentially very damaging impact of a Mercosur deal on the European agriculture sector, and on the beef sector in particular. I have continuously raised the issue with Commissioners Malmström and Hogan, both within and outside the Council of Agriculture Ministers. I also continue to monitor the situation closely in co-operation with my Member State colleagues, as well as with my Government colleagues, particularly the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, and the Taoiseach. These efforts are being reinforced at official level through similar contacts with other Member States and with the Commission, particularly through the Special Committee on Agriculture and the Trade Policy Committee.

In the course of such contacts I have pointed out that an exchange of offers is premature, and that any movement in these negotiations must be undertaken with great caution, and following a period of careful reflection and analysis. This analysis must take into account the cumulative impact of concessions granted under other FTAs and the current forecasts for EU beef consumption. I am also trying to ensure that tariff rate quotas are not dealt with at this early stage of the negotiations, and that when they are ultimately addressed, it will be in a manner that mitigates to the maximum possible extent the potential impact on the beef sector.

Finally, it is of course the intention of the European Commission to ensure that public health and safety will not be put at risk as a result of the import of beef or any other product into the EU as a result of these or any other negotiations. This position is supported by all Member States, including Ireland.

Harness Racing Industry

92. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application for funding submitted by the Irish Harness Racing Association in September 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9093/16]

93. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the signing-off of the terms of reference for the economic report into harness racing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9094/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 92 and 93 together.

The Irish Harness Racing Association has requested financial support from my Department to develop the industry in Ireland. However in the absence of economic data it is difficult to determine what the industry can contribute. My Department has committed to carry out a comprehensive economic analysis of the harness racing industry to determine its current and potential return to the Irish economy, which will require the commissioning of an independent economic consultant. My Department is at present deciding on the terms of reference for such a study.

In the meantime the Association has been approved for funding of €21,704 from the Equine Infrastructure grant scheme operated by my Department. This funding has been approved in respect of projects to develop the association's Breeding database and website, having a presence at the 2016 RDS Horse Show, attendance at a Trotteur conference in France and initiatives to develop further links with relevant international organisations. In addition a further IHRA project, with a focus on equine welfare, has been recently approved by my Department.

My Department has also assisted the Irish Harness Racing Association by facilitating engagement with Horse Racing Ireland which resulted in the Association getting permission to use Dundalk Racecourse for a number of fixtures.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

94. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when he will issue payment to a person (details supplied) under the agri-environment options scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9098/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced their AEOS 1 contract on 1 November 2010. Payment has issued for the 2010-2014 Scheme years.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System must take place. As all AEOS 1 participants will be receiving their final payments under the scheme, re-checks on payments made for all scheme years must be completed before final payment can be processed. Officials are working through these files and payment will be made in all cases as soon as possible.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

95. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) will receive payment under the pig crisis payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9114/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payments have commenced under this scheme and the individual concerned has been paid in the first tranche. Payment should appear in their bank account by Thursday.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

96. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the outcome of an appeal by a person (details supplied) under the basic payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9119/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named does not hold entitlements under the Basic Payment Scheme and submitted an application for consideration under the Scottish Derogation on 28 May 2015. Having examined the application it was established that the person named did not qualify for Scottish Derogation as there was no verifiable evidence of production under the beef, dairy, arable or sheep sectors in 2013, which is a requirement of the scheme.

The person named was notified of this decision and lodged an appeal. However, the information submitted in support of the appeal was not sufficient to overturn the decision made by officials in my Department.

A letter issued from my Department on 14 December 2015 requesting additional information in support of this appeal but none has been received to date. Upon receipt of the requested information a decision will be made regarding eligibility under Scottish Derogation and the person named will be notified accordingly.

GLAS Eligibility

97. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 173 of 26 April 2016, if the specific payment under the green low-carbon agri-environment scheme will issue on designated lands, were an applicant to exempt parcels specifically for fodder production; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9131/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payments under the Green Low-carbon Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS) are justified on the basis of income foregone and the cost of compliance with the specific farming prescription set out in the scheme agri-environment specifications.

In the implementation of the Farmland Birds action, where a farmer chooses to exclude a percentage of the bird habitat from the GLAS farming prescription no payment is made on the area excluded.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

98. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to issue payment to a person (details supplied) under the basic payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9134/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 17 April 2015. Payments due under the BPS issued to the nominated bank account of the person named in December 2015, January 2016 and February 2016. A final balancing payment will issue over the coming weeks when the definitive value of entitlements has been established.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

99. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in issuing payment to a person (details supplied) under the basic payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9135/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named established a Registered Farm Partnership in 2015. He also submitted Transfer of Entitlements Allocation Right and Reference Value, Private Contract Clause and Review of Entitlements applications to my Department. These applications have been fully processed and payment under the Basic Payment Scheme issued to the person named on 4th February 2016, 18th April 2016 and 26th April 2016.

The person named also submitted applications under the ‘young farmer’ category of the 2015 National Reserve and the Young Farmers Scheme to my Department. The 2015 Basic Payment Scheme application was submitted using the Registered Farm Partnership number shown while the applications to the National Reserve and Young Farmers Scheme were submitted using the herd number shown. My Department has aligned the applications submitted separately under the herd number and the Partnership number. These applications have now been finalised and payment will issue shortly.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

100. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to expedite an application (details supplied) for a grant under the targeted agricultural modernisation scheme as approval is urgently required to carry out necessary building refurbishment works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9188/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The applicants in this case have applied under the second tranche of the Pig and Poultry Investment Scheme in TAMS II.

The application has passed the initial administrative checks. All applications received are examined, validated and then have to be ranked and selected. Approvals will commence when this process is complete.

Army Personnel

101. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Defence the starting salary for new entrants in the Army equitation cadetship and the salary scale already in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8824/16]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): The following 5 point pay scale applies to Cadets (including the Army Equitation Cadetship) with effect from 1 November 2013: €16,854*, €19,010 8*, €21,758, €24,592 and €28,270 (* denotes rates applicable when a cadet is in training).

Rates of remuneration and conditions of employment in the Irish public sector have traditionally been set by reference to relative levels of pay across the various sectors of the Irish public sector. The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts of 2009-2015 and the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2018 (Lansdowne Road Agreement) define cur-

rent pay policy.

State Properties Data

102. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No. 248 of 14 April 2016, the length of time each of the sites listed has been vacant. [8890/16]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): Further to the properties listed in the previous Parliamentary Question No. 248 of 14 April 2016, information regarding the length of time each property has been vacant is now included in the following table.

Property	Location	approx. acreage	Local Authority	Date vacated
Landing pier	Castletownbere, Cork	1	Cork	Not in use since 2000
Fort Shannon	Tarbert	2	Kerry	1998
Part of former rifle range lands	Cushla, Roscommon	139	Roscommon	Listed for disposal since 2010
Former rifle range lands	Kilcoran Tipperary	13	Tipperary	due to re open May 2016 following completion of engineering works
Part of former Military Barracks	Nenagh	2	Tipperary	2013
Former rifle range lands	Barna, Templemore	1	Tipperary	Listed for disposal since 2010
Lands	Garrynafeala Athlone	15	Westmeath	Listed for disposal since 2010
Former Military Barracks	Mullingar	24	Westmeath	2012

Home Repossessions Rate

103. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of vacant family homes which have been repossessed in each calendar year since 2008. [8884/16]

104. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of non-vacant family homes repossessed in each calendar year since 2008. [8885/16]

105. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of vacant family homes which were repossessed in each of the years 2008 to 2016 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8943/16]

106. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of non-vacant family homes which were repossessed following evictions in each of the years 2008 to 2016 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8944/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Ques-

tions Nos. 103 to 106, inclusive, together.

The Deputies will be aware that, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service and I have no role in the matter. Section 4(3) of the 1998 Act provides that the Courts Service is independent in the performance of its functions, which includes the provision of information on the courts system. I am informed that the Courts Service does not receive or record information in such a way as to determine if a property is vacant or non-vacant prior to a possession order being made. However, statistics in relation to the number of possession orders made in respect of properties are available on the Courts Service website, www.courts.ie.

It is important to note that the number of civil bills issued does not reflect either the number of orders for possession granted or necessarily equate with repossessions as it is up to the person or company who obtained the order for possession to pursue its execution. Therefore, relative to the number of civil bills issued, a small portion end up as repossessions since in many cases the civil bill gives rise to engagement of the borrower with the bank resulting in either a mortgage restructuring agreement between the bank and borrower or a Personal Insolvency Arrangement entered into under the Personal Insolvency Act.

The Central Bank's quarterly Residential Mortgage Arrears and Repossession Statistics have information which may be of interest to the Deputies and they are available at www.centralbank.ie. The statistics include the number of properties taken into possession by lenders during the relevant quarter including the number which were repossessed on foot of a Court Order.

I would like to refer the Deputies to the range of measures that have already been put in place under the Government's Framework to Strengthen Support of Mortgage Arrears with the aim of providing assistance for people in mortgage arrears, including:

- the enactment on 28 July 2015 of the Personal Insolvency (Amendment) Act 2015, and commencement on 20 November 2015 of the new Court review under section 115A, where banks refuse a personal insolvency proposal on the borrower's home;

- the development of Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) as the Government's 'one-stop shop' point of information and guidance for homeowners in mortgage arrears, working closely with the Insolvency Service;

- the establishment and staffing of Dedicated Mortgage Arrears MABS centres, in key locations with nationwide coverage, with specialised expertise on mortgage debt; and

- the presence of MABS and the Insolvency Service at courthouses to provide information and 'signposting' support for householders issued with repossession proceedings against their homes (operating nationwide since 1 October, after successful pilot in July 2015). This initiative is facilitated by the Courts Service, and is currently provided for all Circuit Court repossession hearings.

In addition, the Government will shortly be putting in place a new Government-funded Scheme to help people who are insolvent, and in mortgage arrears on their home, to access independent expert financial and legal advice. The scheme has 3 components:

(i) Provision of financial advice and assistance.

This involves the provision of advice and assistance from a Personal Insolvency Practitioner, or other financial adviser as appropriate, drawn from panels agreeing to provide specified levels and amounts of services under the Scheme at fixed cost. This will be provided without

cost to an insolvent borrower, under a 'voucher' system, and will be accessed through MABS, working in conjunction with the Insolvency Service and the accountancy bodies.

(ii) Provision of legal advice and assistance.

This involves the provision of advice and assistance from a solicitor, drawn from panels to be set up by the Legal Aid Board, who agrees to provide specified levels and amounts of services under the Scheme at fixed cost. The scheme will provide assistance and representation for insolvent borrowers in repossession proceedings involving their home, via a panel of 'duty solicitors' at repossession hearings, operated by the Legal Aid Board.

Again, this assistance will be provided without cost to an insolvent borrower, under a 'voucher' system, and will be accessed through MABS, working in conjunction with the Legal Aid Board.

(iii) Provision of legal aid.

This involves the provision of legal aid for insolvent borrowers seeking the new Court review under section 115A Personal of the Insolvency Acts, where a borrower's proposal for a Personal Insolvency Arrangement including mortgage arrears on their home is refused by their creditors. This component will be operated by the Legal Aid Board.

The overall objective of the Scheme is to help people who are insolvent (unable to pay their debts in full as they fall due), and are in serious mortgage arrears on their homes, to access independent expert financial and/or legal advice and assistance, which will help them to find the best possible solutions, with the aim of remaining in their homes where possible.

Public Sector Pensions

107. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a person (details supplied) will receive an outcome on an application for a pension under Article 15; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8988/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed that there is no record, in the Garda Pensions Administration section of the Department, of an application for an Article 15 pension in respect of this person.

However, the eligibility of the person in this case for such a pension has been reviewed and it appears that she is not eligible for this particular pension.

The Garda Pensions Administration section will shortly contact the person in this case directly to confirm this position.

Commissions of Inquiry

108. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to order the establishment of a commission of inquiry into the death of a person (details supplied), given the concerns regarding the investigation of this person's death, and the allegations of political interference in that investigation. [9169/16]

111. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to accede to a request by persons for a commission of inquiry into the disappearance of a person (details sup-

plied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8854/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As I have set out in responses to previous parliamentary questions in relation to this case, the disappearance of the person in question remains the subject of an ongoing Garda investigation and I am advised that the Garda Review Team is endeavouring to advance the investigation and that all avenues of investigation are being pursued in this regard. In these circumstances, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the case, nor would the establishment of a parallel Commission of Investigation be warranted.

Visa Applications

109. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when she will make a decision on a joint family (Irish national spouse) visa for a person (details supplied), given that the application is ongoing for almost 12 months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8809/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by officials in the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that a 'join family' visa application from the person referred to by the Deputy was submitted to the INIS Visa Office in New Delhi on the 28/05/2015. Whilst a preliminary assessment of the application has been completed, the application referred to requires a more comprehensive examination. Officials will be in contact with the applicant and sponsor as soon as a decision is made.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

In addition, applicants who have submitted applications to the office in New Delhi may e-mail queries directly to INIS (newdelhivisaoffice@dfa.ie).

Garda Data

110. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of agreements under section 28 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 and the jurisdictions in which they were made; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8822/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Section 28 of the Garda Síochána Act provides that the Garda Commissioner may enter into agreements with police services or law enforcement agencies outside the State, with the prior consent of the Government. These agreements may provide for co-operation between the parties, the exchange of information or such matters as the Commissioner thinks fit.

My officials are pursuing enquiries in relation to the information sought by the Deputy, including seeking relevant information from the Garda Commissioner, and I will revert to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Question No. 111 answered with Question No. 108

UN Conventions Ratification

112. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the State's ratification of the optional protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. [8856/16]

114. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when Ireland will ratify the optional protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which was signed in 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8863/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 112 and 114 together.

I refer the Deputies to my reply to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 357 and 358 of 6 April 2016 setting out the position.

Reply to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 357 and 358 of 6 April 2016.

The Deputy is referring to OPCAT or Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment and Punishment.

Ireland is a signatory to the protocol and will ratify it, once the necessary legislation is in place to provide for National Preventative Mechanisms (NPMs) to inspect places of detention for the purposes of the protocol.

As part of the process of identifying the appropriate NPMs, consultation with civil society, including a wide range of statutory bodies and agencies, non governmental organisations and academics with an interest in the topic is underway. An Open Policy Debate hosted by the Department of Justice and Equality in November 2015 provided an opportunity for the various parties to come together and discuss options for NPMs. Building on this, proposals are being further developed to facilitate the ratification of the OPCAT.

Prisoner Complaints Procedures

113. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when she will introduce a fully independent prisoner complaints mechanism; the barriers to introducing such a mechanism; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8862/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The current prisoner complaints system was introduced in the Irish Prison Service in November 2012 based on a model recommended by the Inspector of Prisons who has independent oversight of the process. It was introduced in acknowledgment that prisoners must have access to a credible and robust system that deals with genuine complaints in an open, transparent, and independent way.

The system is categorised depending on the nature of the complaint. Category A complaints concern the most serious level of complaint (assault, serious intimidation by staff etc.). Category B complaints include allegations of discrimination, verbal abuse by officers and inappropriate searches. Category C complaints are essentially service complaints where a prisoner is unhappy with the level of service in a particular prison. Category D complaints are those alleging misconduct or mistreatment by professionals providing services to prisoners such as doctors, dentists etc.

To support and give effect to these new complaint procedures the then Minister announced amendments to the Prison Rules in January 2013. In the main, the amendments provide that prisoner complaints under Category A will be examined by investigators from outside the Prison Service to ensure an effective and impartial investigation. The complainant is to be kept informed and the reports by outside investigators are automatically submitted to the Governor in question, the Director General and the Inspector of Prisons. The Inspector has had oversight of the process from the very beginning which was also strengthened by extra resources assigned to his office.

A panel of 22 Independent Investigators was established following a selection and interview process.

It should be noted that, in addition to the complaints system described above, a prisoner may make a complaint about treatment in custody through a number of other channels, including the Prison Visiting Committee and the Inspector of Prisons.

Finally, the Inspector of Prisons, who is independent of Government, has carried out a review of the prisoner complaints procedure currently in operation in the Irish Prison Service and has made a number of recommendations, including one relating to a possible role for an Ombudsman. My officials and I are currently examining those recommendations.

Question No. 114 answered with Question No. 112.

Garda Operations

115. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to seek a detailed report from the Garda Commissioner regarding the Garda Síochána Operation Butler; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8865/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Garda authorities that Operation Butler is an ongoing, intelligence-led Garda investigation concerning the importation and sale of stolen vehicles from the UK, primarily vans and commercial vehicles. The operation has involved coordinated searches in the Districts of Granard, Longford, Cavan and Tallaght. To date, 20 stolen vans/commercial vehicles and 1 stolen motor home have been recovered by the Garda Síochána. I am informed that while no arrests have been made to date as the investigation is ongoing with numerous lines of enquiry currently being conducted it would not be appropriate to further comment in relation to an ongoing investigation.

State Properties Data

116. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 336 of 14 April 2016, the length of time each of the sites listed have been vacant. [8891/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to inform the Deputy that it has not been possible to provide the information requested in the time available. I will write to the Deputy directly when this information is to hand.

Criminal Law

117. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she has considered proscribing membership of criminal gangs; if such gangs have been proscribed in other jurisdictions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8914/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The question of providing for an offence of membership of a criminal gang, in a manner similar to the approach taken in the Offences Against the State Acts with regard to membership of a proscribed organisation, has arisen from time to time.

In this regard, it is important to understand the issues which arise in seeking to simply outlaw membership of a criminal gang in such a manner. Most significant is the fact that a criminal gang is not likely to have the permanency of organisation and structure that a subversive organisation or other more fixed group would have. Relationships in criminal gangs tend to be more fluid with shifting memberships, alliances and a membership which may depend on circumstance.

I therefore understand the Deputy's question to relate to organised criminal groups.

In this regard, criminal legislation has been updated in recent years, with a view to ensuring that it provides a comprehensive range of provisions for the prosecution and punishment of crime, in particular the activities of those involved in organised crime.

Part 7 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 (as amended by the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009) establishes a number of offences targeting the activities of those involved in organised crime. These offences include participation in a criminal organisation and directing a criminal organisation. The latter offence specifically targets those in criminal organisations who give the orders without requiring their direct participation in the commission of criminal offences. On conviction, this offence carries a penalty of up to life imprisonment.

The Criminal Justice Act 2006 also makes it an offence to conspire with one or more persons to do an act that constitutes a serious offence, irrespective of whether such act actually takes place or not.

Evidential provisions as to the existence of a criminal organisation were introduced aiding prosecution for the offences under the Act. Provision was also introduced so that where a serious offence is committed as part of or in furtherance of a criminal organisation, it shall be treated as an aggravating factor for the purpose of determining sentence.

With regard to the situation internationally, the question of how best to deal with participation in and/or directing a criminal organisation through the criminal law has been the subject of debate in the development of common international standards. Relevant international instruments to which Ireland is a party are the European Union Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA on the fight against organised crime and the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. State Parties to these instruments are required to give effect to the measures set out therein. Ireland has done so through domestic criminal law including the legislation outlined above.

Garda Recruitment

118. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which membership of An Garda Síochána will increase over the next twelve months, given natural retirements and resignations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8915/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will be aware, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of personnel among the Garda Regions, Divisions, and Districts. Garda management keep this distribution under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the best possible use is made of resources. I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that the overall number of personnel available to An Garda Síochána on the 29 February 2016 was close to 16,000 comprising 12,785 Gardaí, 932 Garda Reserve members and over 2,000 civilians.

The Deputy will appreciate it is vital that An Garda Síochána is renewed in order to ensure that it has the capacity to provide effective and visible policing throughout the country. With this objective in mind, there have been seven intakes of Garda Trainees to the Garda College since it was reopened in September 2014 giving a total intake of 700. A further 450 will be taken in this year. So far 395 of the new Garda Trainees have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream uniform duties in communities nationwide.

It is expected that a further 300 Garda Trainees will attest by the end of this year which, taking account of projected retirements, will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark. This does not, of course, take account of any proposals that may be agreed as part of the ongoing discussions on the formation of a Government.

Legal Aid Service

119. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which the legal aid system continues to be most beneficial to hardened criminals and members of criminal gangs; the extent to which statistics are available which might indicate specific trends in this area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8916/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Act 1962 provides that free legal aid may be granted in certain circumstances for the defence of persons of insufficient means in criminal proceedings. Under the 1962 Act, the courts, through the judiciary, are responsible for the granting of legal aid. An applicant must establish to the satisfaction of the court that their means are insufficient to enable them to pay for legal representation themselves. The court must also be satisfied that, by reason of the “gravity of the charge” or “exceptional circumstances”, it is essential in the interests of justice that the applicant should have legal aid. An applicant’s previous convictions are not a criterion for access to legal aid under the Act and the legal aid system does not record whether or not persons granted legal aid are hardened criminals or members of criminal gangs. I have no function in these matters which are determined by the judiciary.

These provisions must have regard to the right to a fair trial, including the provision of legal aid where appropriate, which is a Constitutional right upheld by the courts in a number of judgments. The Supreme Court ruling in the case of *State (Healy) v Donoghue [1976]I.R. 325* effectively determined that the right to criminal legal aid is, in circumstances which are quite wide in practice, a Constitutional right. Article 6(3)(c) of the European Convention on Human Rights states that “*Everyone charged with a criminal offence has [the right] to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing or, if he has not sufficient means to pay for legal assistance, to be given it free when the interests of justice so require*”. As the Deputy will be aware, an accused person is entitled to a presumption of innocence and legal representation and any obstacles to obtaining necessary legal aid which were found to be unreasonable could give a defendant an avenue for appeal or prohibition of the prosecution. The overriding concern is to ensure that no risk arises in relation to the prosecution of persons charged with criminal offences before the courts.

Garda Vetting Applications

120. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when an application for Garda Síochána vetting will be finalised for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8951/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Garda authorities that a vetting application in respect of the person referred to has been received by the Garda Central Vetting Unit.

On processing the application the Garda Central Vetting Unit established that it was necessary to conduct further enquiries with external agencies which are still ongoing.

Enquiries with external agencies are conducted for a multiplicity of reasons such as verification of identity, updating of incomplete records and establishing outcomes of investigations. In such instances processing times are significantly longer than the general average.

The application will be returned to the registered organisation upon its completion.

Garda Resources

121. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to address issues raised with regard to armed resources within An Garda Síochána (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8953/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate the deployment of the Garda personnel and resources is a matter for the Garda Commissioner. The balance between armed and unarmed members of the organisation, is of course, kept under review in the light of emerging challenges. In this regard, at the request of the Commissioner earlier this year, the Government moved decisively to strengthen the resources available to An Garda Síochána to deal with gang related crime in the Dublin area through a special allocation of €5 million to support the establishment of a dedicated Armed Support Unit in Dublin amongst other measures. Work is progressing as a matter of priority on the establishment of that unit.

As the Deputy may be aware, the Taoiseach and I recently met with senior Garda management and were briefed on the significant progress being made in investigations into recent gang-related murders in the Dublin region. As these appalling crimes are the subject of ongoing Garda investigations it would not be appropriate for me to make any more detailed comment at this time, however, I can assure the Deputy that I remain committed to ensuring that An Garda Síochána have the necessary resources to pursue the robust strategy which the Commissioner and her senior officers have put in place to oppose the violent thugs who have perpetrated such heinous crimes in our Capital City. The Garda response includes highly visible policing, the use of armed checkpoints and targeted and intelligence based operations, with a view to disrupting and preventing incidents as well as detecting and prosecuting those involved. These measures are in addition to the intensive Garda recruitment programme which is currently underway.

The recent investments in Garda resources are also supporting a wider countrywide drive against crime under Operation Thor and there will be ongoing support for anti-crime measures due to the very significant resources committed in the Capital Plan 2016-2021. This Plan includes an allocation of €46 million for new Garda vehicles to ensure that Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community. In addition, the Government is

investing in enhanced Garda technology and ICT systems with an additional €205 million allocated for Garda ICT over the lifetime of the Plan.

I might add that heavy penalties are provided for weapons offences in our criminal law and mandatory minimum penalties have been introduced for certain firearms offences. The considerable powers already available to Gardaí have been supplemented further by the newly established DNA Database which will have the capacity to link suspects to unsolved crimes using forensic evidence, and will greatly assist Gardaí in investigating serious gun crimes and a whole range of other serious offences.

Needless to say there are enormous difficulties in counteracting those who are determined to perpetuate a cycle of mindless violence without any regard to human life or public safety. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that An Garda Síochána have in the past successfully faced-down gangs who believed they were above the law. I trust that all in this House will agree that the State must continue to take all appropriate measures to oppose and dismantle criminal gang networks and to disrupt the evil drugs trade which is at the heart of much of their activities.

Anti-Social Behaviour

122. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of anti-social behavioural orders for which complaints were received, dismissed, investigated and orders issued, by county, over the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8976/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): In the time available it has not been possible to obtain the information sought by the Deputy. I have sought a report from the Garda authorities and a reply will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as the report is to hand.

Naturalisation Applications

123. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the appropriate application form which a person (details supplied) requires to apply for naturalisation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9018/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the person referred to by the Deputy will be eighteen years of age next July it will be open to her to apply for a certificate of naturalisation using the Form 8 application, which is the appropriate application form for a certificate of naturalisation by a person of full age.

Section 15 of the Act provides that the Minister may, in her absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation provided certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are that the applicant must:

- be of full age

- be of good character

- have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the State immediately before the date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a total residence in the State amounting to four years

- intend in good faith to continue to reside in the State after naturalisation

- have, before a judge of the District Court in open court, in a citizenship ceremony or in such manner as the Minister, for special reasons, allows:

(i) made a declaration, in the prescribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, and

(ii) undertaken to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet the all the statutory requirements. An on-line residency calculator is available on the website *www.inis.gov.ie* which may be of assistance in establishing if the residency requirements are met.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been established specifically for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Gangland Killings

124. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the actions she proposes to take regarding gangland crime and recent murder, especially those committed in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9064/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy may be aware, the Taoiseach and I met recently with senior Garda management in relation to these serious matters, and were briefed on the significant progress being made in investigations into recent organised crime related murders in the Dublin region. The Deputy will appreciate that as these appalling crimes are the subject of ongoing Garda investigations it would not be appropriate for me to make any more detailed comment at this time.

However, I can assure the Deputy that I remain committed to ensuring that An Garda Síochána have the necessary resources to pursue the robust strategy which the Commissioner and her senior officers have put in place to oppose those who have perpetrated such heinous crimes in our capital city. The Garda response includes highly visible policing, the use of armed checkpoints, and targeted and intelligence based operations, with a view to disrupting and preventing incidents as well as detecting and prosecuting those involved. Work is also progressing on the establishment of the additional, dedicated Armed Support unit for Dublin which I first announced in February and pending the establishment of which armed support is being provided on an overtime basis. These measures are in addition to the intensive Garda recruitment programme which is currently underway.

I might add that heavy penalties are provided for weapons offences in our criminal law and mandatory minimum penalties have been introduced for certain firearms offences. The considerable powers already available to Gardaí have been supplemented further by the newly established DNA Database which will have the capacity to link suspects to unsolved crimes using forensic evidence, and will greatly assist Gardaí in investigating serious gun crimes and a whole range of other serious offences.

Needless to say there are very real challenges in counteracting those who are determined to perpetuate a cycle of mindless violence without any regard to human life of public safety. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that An Garda Síochána have in the past successfully faced-down criminal gangs who believed they were above the law. I trust that all in this House will agree that the State must continue to take all appropriate measures to oppose and dismantle such operations and to disrupt the drugs trade which is at the heart of much of their activities.

Garda Strength

125. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of members of An Garda Síochána in Dublin north in each of the past ten years, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9075/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and Districts and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the number of Gardaí assigned to the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) North Garda Division on the 31 December 2006 - 2015 and on the 29 February 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, are as set out in the following table.

The Deputy will appreciate that it is vital that An Garda Síochána is renewed in order to ensure that it has the capacity to provide effective and visible policing throughout the country. Since the Garda College reopened in September 2014, there have been seven intakes of Garda Trainees giving a total intake of 700, with a further 450 to be recruited this year. This does not, of course, take account of any proposals that may be agreed as part of the ongoing discussions on the formation of a Government.

So far 395 of the new Garda Trainees have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned by the Garda Commissioner to Garda stations throughout the country to carry out mainstream uniform policing duties. I have been informed that of these, 29 have been assigned to the DMR North Garda Division. I am assured by Garda management that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of newly attested Gardaí.

Dublin Metropolitan Region North Garda Division 2006 to 2016											
Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	*2016
Strength	640	755	779	826	798	774	744	714	681	668	666

* as of 29 February 2016

Garda Stations

126. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she is considering the re-opening of Garda Síochána stations in Ballymore Eustace and Ballytore in County Kildare; if she is using crime statistics to evaluate this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9136/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The formulation of proposals in relation to the opening and closing of Garda Stations is a matter, in the first instance, for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

During 2011 and 2012, An Garda Síochána completed a comprehensive review of its district and station network. The objective of this review was to identify opportunities to introduce strategic reforms to enhance service delivery, increase efficiency and streamline practices within the organisation. The review concluded that a revised district and station network commensurate with the organisation's resource base would best meet public demand. As a result, the Garda District and Station Rationalisation Programme was implemented in 2012 and 2013. This was reflected in An Garda Síochána's Policing Plans for 2012 and 2013 which set out the details of the closure of 39 Garda stations in 2012 and 100 Garda stations in 2013.

The closures have allowed front line Garda to be managed and deployed with greater mobility, greater flexibility and in a more focused fashion particularly with regard to various targeted police operations.

I am informed by the Garda Authorities that the current consolidation process is largely completed. There are no proposals to either re-open or close any Garda stations in the Policing Plan for 2016.

The Garda Station Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021, which I announced in late October with my colleague the Minister of State at the OPW, is based on agreed priorities which are established by An Garda Síochána. Over thirty locations around the country will benefit from the Programme which includes major refurbishment of stations and facilities including facilities for meeting victims of crime, essential remedial works to existing stations, development of large scale property and exhibit management stores, the upgrade of cells and provision of improved custody management facilities. The Programme will be delivered by the Garda Authorities in cooperation with the OPW which has responsibility for capital expenditure in this area.

Property Registration

127. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of a section 49 application to the registrar of the Property Registration Authority by a person (details supplied) who suffers from a number of illnesses and is currently in receipt of disability allowance. [9146/16]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can inform the Deputy that under the Registration of Deeds and Title Act 2006, the Property Registration Authority (PRA) was established as and from 4 November 2006. The PRA replaces the Registrar of Deeds and Titles as the registering authority in relation to property registration in Ireland and, subject to the above Act, is independent in the performance of its functions.

The Deputy will be aware of the service to T.D.s and Senators which provides information on the current status of applications, such as the subject of this question, which was introduced in May 2006. The service provides a speedier, more efficient and more cost effective alternative to submitting Parliamentary Questions. It is operated by the PRA and is available all year round.

I can further inform the Deputy that his query has been forwarded to the PRA for attention and direct reply via the above mentioned service.

Child Care Services Funding

128. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the financial support available for a child care facility that wishes to provide an after-hours service to develop or secure a premises for its service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8846/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): Capital funding of more than €420 million was provided by the State to support the development of childcare infrastructure in the period up until 2008. Since the economic downturn the limited funding available to this Department has been targeted to support the refurbishment and maintenance of childcare facilities in which there has already been considerable investment.

I announced earlier this year the introduction of an Early Years Capital Programme 2016 with total funding of €4 million available. This funding is targeted at early years pre-school providers that are making alterations to their services to accommodate the increased numbers of children eligible for the free pre-school provision following my decision to expand the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. The number of children availing of the programme will increase from approximately 67,000 per year to 127,000 per year following the full roll out of the expanded pre-school provision.

Last year, I established the Inter-Departmental Group to consider options for future investment in early years and after-school childcare and to set out a range of options for future investment which would enhance affordability, increase the accessibility and improve the quality of early years and after-school childcare.

Several recommendations of the Group, including a number which relate to after-school childcare, were considered as part of the Estimates process for the Budget and will also be funded in 2016. These include a €3 million capital fund, which will be provided to enable both community/not-for-profit and private providers to develop after-school childcare services using existing school and other accessible community facilities. The terms and conditions for this €3 million capital fund are currently being drafted.

A number of support programmes are implemented by this Department to support parents to access quality after-school childcare services. These include:

- The After-School Childcare (ASCC) programme that provides after-school care for primary school children of eligible parents for a period of 52 weeks. Eligibility for the programme is determined by the Department of Social Protection. The programme contributes €40 per week for an after-school place or €80 per week in situations where the childcare service provides a pick-up service that collects the child from school. The programme also provides a full day care rate of €105 per week, for a maximum of 10 weeks, to cater for school holiday periods. In all cases, the maximum fee payable by parents is €15 per week per child.

- The Community Employment Childcare (CEC) programme, which is targeted specifically at participants in the Community Employment (CE) schemes operated by the Department of Social Protection. Under this programme, €80 per week is provided for pre-school places for children up to the age of 5 and €40 per week for after-school places for primary school children up to the age of 13, with a set charge of €15 per week to the parent in either case. The programme also provides a part time day care rate of €80 per week, for a maximum of 10 weeks, to cater for school holiday periods. Places are approved for 50 weeks. Eligibility for the CEC programme is determined by the Department of Social Protection.

- The Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) programme, which provides childcare places, including part-time and after-school places, to qualifying Solas or Education and

Training Boards (ETB) trainees or students for the duration of their courses. Eligibility for the CETS programme is determined by the Department of Education and Skills.

- The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme provides funding to childcare services to enable them to provide quality childcare, including after-school care, at reduced rates to disadvantaged and low income working parents.

Children's Rights

129. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if he received a submission from the Children's Rights Alliance in respect of the serious issues for children and young persons as outlined in the programme for Government 2011 to 2016; his plans to implement any recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8853/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): I have received from the Children's Rights Alliance a copy of its recently published Report Card 2016. I gather that the CRA sent a copy to each member of the Oireachtas.

The Deputy will be aware that the Report Card is an established accountability tool for the CRA and its more than 100 member organisations through which it has, since 2009, scrutinised progress on the commitments to children in the Programme for Government. The most recent Report Card explores progress during 2015 against commitments in the 2011-2016 Programme for Government.

Each year, the CRA evaluates Government's delivery of its promises in six key areas - children's constitutional rights, the right to education, to health, to an adequate standard of living, to protection from abuse and neglect and the right to equality and non-discrimination. The grading is carried out by a high-level independent panel, comprising some of Ireland's leading experts in children's rights, child law, education, early years and from the trade union sector. The Report Card also provides an important resource for politicians, policy makers, service providers and non-governmental organisations and academics. The recommendations contained therein traverse the remits of my colleagues across other Government Departments as well as covering issues under the direct remit of my Department.

I would also note that a considerable number of recommendations are reflected in the commitments contained within *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, with responsibility for implementation again falling to the respective Government Departments. My Department is responsible for monitoring progress on the implementation of *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* and supporting its key implementation structures across Departments and sectors. An annual report on progress towards those commitments to April 2015 was published in 2015 with the second report covering the following year to April 2016 currently in preparation.

I can inform the Deputy that the CRA recently contacted the Secretary General in my Department to arrange a meeting to discuss issues arising from the Report Card 2016. A meeting is being arranged for the coming weeks. In addition, the Department engaged in a funding arrangement with the CRA in 2015 to support the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The Department has recently received correspondence from the CRA with regard to an ongoing funding support. This proposal is under active consideration. This funding arrangement recognises the work of the CRA in the areas of consultation, representation and consensus building, which has in turn supported the work and shared objectives of my Department.

State Properties Data

130. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 359 of 14 April 2016, the length of time each site listed has been vacant. [8892/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): I can confirm that the only known sole occupancy property currently owned by Tusla, and which is vacant, is located at 69 Amiens Street, Dublin 1 in the Dublin City Council area and has been vacant for two years. Tusla is endeavouring to secure funding for a change of use from residential to office accommodation in order to meet future office accommodation requirements for the Agency. Funding is required for change of use and remodelling/fit-out of approximately 310m² accommodation.

Youth Services

131. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the degree to which he liaises with the voluntary child and youth support agencies in County Kildare, with particular reference to addressing ongoing issues and challenges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8918/16]

132. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which he will continue support for Kildare Youth Services in line with increased demands and requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8919/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 131 and 132 together.

My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. The funding schemes support national and local youth work provision to some 380,000 young people and involve approximately 1,400 youth work staff in 477 projects and 40,000 volunteers working in youth work services and communities throughout the country. In 2016, funding of €51m has been provided to my Department for these schemes.

In 2016, an amount of €500,405 has been allocated for the projects and services under Kildare Youth Services, which operates under Youth Work Ireland, an increase of more than €12,000 on the 2015 allocation. My Department provides funding to Kildare Youth Services under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme in respect of six local youth projects in Athy, Naas, Leixlip, Newbridge, the Curragh and Kildare town and a Youth Information Centre in Naas.

In addition, €2.6m in capital funding has been allocated to my Department for 2016. In the main, this funding will be used to support smaller scale projects, such as refurbishments, health and safety works, and accessibility improvements in youth services. Details of the capital grant scheme are available from my Department's website, www.dcy.gov.ie.

I, and officials of my Department have met, and continue to meet, regularly with many voluntary organisations and groups providing services to children and young people to see how we can work together to bring about the best possible outcomes for young people, having regard to resources available to us and to ensure that the programmes and services being provided are relevant and responsive to young people's needs. Ongoing engagement and dialogue with the youth sector organisations and with young people themselves are priorities in the development of the policies and services to support young people's development and learning. Most recently,

on 28th April 2016 I and officials from my Department met with representatives of over 30 national and major regional voluntary youth organisations that work with children and young people, throughout the country. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity to share knowledge and information about developments to support the provision of services to secure improved outcomes for children and young people.

The National Youth Strategy 2015-2020, published last October was developed in close consultation with statutory youth interests and the voluntary youth organisations and services that work with young people. The strategy sets out Government's aims for young people, aged 10 to 24 years, so that they are active and healthy, achieving their full potential in learning and development, safe and protected from harm, have economic security and opportunity and are connected and contributing to their world. The implementation structures established by my Department under *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* will oversee the roll-out of the National Youth Strategy.

National voluntary organisations that work with children and young people are represented at the Advisory Council for the implementation of *Better Outcomes Brighter Future*.

At local level, Youth Officers of the Education and Training Boards have an important support role on behalf of my Department, to local youth services. My Department works closely with them to address issues that arise for local services. Officials of my Department met Kildare Youth Services and have visited their Kildare Youth Service to hear about their work and their proposals, for the provision of services in County Kildare.

Child and Family Agency

133. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs why there is a delay in forwarding mother and baby files from St. Patrick's on the Navan Road to the Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, office in Blanchardstown in Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8992/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): The records from Saint Patrick's, on the Navan Road, Dublin 7 are currently in the TUSLA Child and Family Agency office in Blanchardstown, Dublin 15.

Early Childhood Care and Education

134. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs his plans to reform the early childhood care and education scheme; if he will make the conditions of the scheme more flexible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9013/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme currently provides one free pre-school year to children who are in the age range 3 years 2 months to 4 years and 7 months in September in the year of enrolment. It was the case that only children who satisfied the age criteria in September could access the programme during the following school year.

In Budget 2016, I announced a significant expansion the pre-school provision under the ECCE programme. This measure, which will be introduced from September 2016, means that children will be eligible to start free pre-school when they reach the age of 3, and continue to avail of free pre-school until they start primary school (once the child is not older than 5½ years

at the end of the pre-school year i.e. end June). Following the introduction of the expanded programme there will be three opportunities each year - in September, January and April - for eligible children to enrol for the free pre-school provision. This will ensure that children aged 3 or over have the opportunity to enrol as soon as possible after their third birthday.

This extension of the Programme will increase the number of children availing of free pre-school from about 67,000 p.a to 127,000 in a given programme year.

I was conscious also of the difficulty experienced by some children with a disability in accessing and benefiting fully from the ECCE Programme. To address this issue, I announced in Budget 2016 the necessary funding to implement a new practical, workable model for meeting the needs of children with a disability. The model will deliver seven levels of support to enable the full inclusion and meaningful participation of children with disabilities in the ECCE Programme. These are:-

- i. An Inclusive Culture
- ii. Information for Parents and Providers
- iii. A Qualified and Confident Workforce
- iv. Expert Educational Advice & Support
- v. Equipment, Appliances and Minor Alterations
- vi. Therapeutic Intervention
- vii. Additional Assistance (where the supports available at levels 1-6 are not sufficient to meet a child's needs).

Work on the detailed design and implementation of the new model for meeting the needs of children with a disability is at an advanced stage. The view is to introduce the initiative from September 2016. It is intended that service providers and parents will be able to submit applications for supports under the new model from June 2016 onwards to allow them to plan for pre-school enrolment in September 2016 and to ensure that children will begin to benefit from these measures from that point forward.

The new measures which I am introducing will ensure that all children in Ireland from the age of 3 years will be able to access free education, either in pre-school or in primary school, which is a significant step forward for children and families.

Appointments to State Boards

135. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the appointment of members to fill the vacancies on the Council of Gaisce, the President's Award, some of which have existed for over a year; his views regarding the precedent for having a previous award recipient on the council; on youth participation in decision making in this organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9095/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): Gaisce is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. Under the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the company, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs appoints members to the Council of Gaisce.

I am advised that there are six vacancies at this time. A number of reappointments and appointments were made in 2015. Officials of my Department and Gaisce are engaging with the Public Appointments Service in relation to the identification of suitably qualified candidates for appointment to the Council.

In line with the 2014 Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards, Gaisce has identified the competencies and experiences and skills that are most needed on the Council at this time. Gaisce is committed to ensuring that young people have the greatest opportunity possible to apply for appointment, including those who have been award recipients in the past or have experience of the Gaisce programme.

The Public Appointments Service, Gaisce and officials from my Department recently met to discuss this matter. Gaisce restated at this meeting that a priority from their perspective was allowing young people the greatest opportunity possible to apply for appointment to the Council. I welcome Gaisce's commitment to ensuring young people have the opportunity to apply for appointment which is in keeping with the National Strategy on Children and Young People's participation in decision making. The Public Appointments Service are currently working to revise the draft advertisement booklet following that meeting with the expectation that it will be agreed in the coming weeks. Gaisce and the Public Appointments Service will then make a decision as to when the positions should be advertised so as to optimise the number of young people and others who will apply.

General Practitioner Services Provision

136. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health to fully reinstate the rural general practitioner allowance as a matter of urgency to ensure that rural areas are adequately provided with local general practitioner care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8831/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Government is committed to ensuring that patients throughout the country continue to have access to GP services, especially in remote, rural areas and also in certain urban areas, and that general practice is sustainable in such areas into the future. There has been a positive engagement between the HSE, the Department and the IMO on a set of proposals for enhanced rural GP practice support and an updated list of special items of service. These proposals arise from the current phase of discussions on the modernisation of the GMS GP contract.

The Department is currently preparing a Statutory Instrument which would give effect to the proposed arrangements. Under the legislation, the Statutory Instrument also requires the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to give effect to the above proposals.

Mental Health Services Provision

137. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which child psychiatric services remain adequate to meet modern challenges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8917/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The HSE National Service Plan 2016 aims to improve placement of children in age appropriate mental health settings. A 95% target of appropriate placements in Child and Adolescent Units is indicated in the Plan, to allow for some operational flexibility surrounding emergency placements in Adult Units. While it remains challenging for the HSE to meet this ambitious target progress

on this important area has been significant despite increasing demands generally on CAMHS service. This is underscored by the fact that there were 247 such admissions to adult units in 2008, and 95 admissions in 2015. It is a priority for the HSE to keep such admissions to a minimum, and this is kept under constant review.

I have prioritised developing all aspects of CAMHS, including timely access to appropriate services, early intervention and an integrated service approach. Additional resources and facilities means that we now have 67 CAMHS Teams, and 3 Paediatric Liaison Teams, supported by 66 operational CAMHS beds across the country. This includes the extra 8 CAMHS beds recently opened in the new Linn Dara Unit in Dublin, which is helping to decrease pressures on CAMHS admissions to adult units. Further CAMHS beds are scheduled to open in the system.

The HSE is committed to ensuring that all aspects of CAMHS services are delivered in a consistent and timely fashion, including improved access to age appropriate units. Last year, the Executive introduced a new **Standard Operating Procedure** for both in-patient and community CAMHS services. This has contributed to improving services overall, including reducing inappropriate admissions of adolescents to adult units. It is designed also to reduce CAMHS Waiting Lists, particularly for those waiting over 12 months.

Bearing in mind all the circumstances, I am satisfied that the HSE is making real progress in relation to the issues raised by the Deputy, while taking account of the wishes of each young person, their parents or guardians, and the complexities of each case. In many instances, a multi-disciplinary or inter-agency approach is required. The Department will continue to closely monitor this issue, in conjunction with the HSE, to ensure that the various new initiatives now underway, will contribute to improving CAMHS services, including the rate of age appropriate admissions across all regions.

Hospital Staff Data

138. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Health the number of unfilled job vacancies which exist in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda, County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8810/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up on the matter with them.

Hospital Services

139. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients treated in Louth County Hospital, Dundalk, County Louth in 2015; the services available in the hospital; his plans to increase the number of services available there; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8811/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Services

140. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Health if the pigmented lesions clinic at St. Vincent's University Hospital in County Dublin is closing to new referrals between May and September 2016 due to staffing shortages; the locations suspected skin cancer sufferers, especially those with malignant melanoma, will be referred to during this period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8825/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Deputy's question relates to service delivery matters and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter with them.

Mental Health Services Provision

141. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the issue of young persons being treated in adult facilities for mental health issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8827/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The HSE National Service Plan 2016 aims to improve placement of children in age appropriate mental health settings. A 95% target of appropriate placements in Child and Adolescent Units is indicated in the Plan to allow for some operational flexibility surrounding emergency placements in Adult Units. While it remains challenging for the HSE to meet this ambitious target progress on this important area has been significant despite increasing demands generally on CAMHS service. This is underscored by the fact that there were 247 such admissions to adult units in 2008, and 95 admissions in 2015. It is a priority for the HSE to keep such admissions to a minimum, and this is kept under constant review.

I have prioritised developing all aspects of CAMHS, including timely access to appropriate services, early intervention and an integrated service approach. Additional resources and facilities means that we now have 67 CAMHS Teams, and 3 Paediatric Liaison Teams, supported by 66 operational CAMHS beds across the country. This includes the extra 8 CAMHS beds recently opened in the new Linn Dara Unit in Dublin, which is helping to decrease pressures on CAMHS admissions to adult units. Further CAMHS beds are scheduled to open in the system.

The HSE is committed to ensuring that all aspects of CAMHS services are delivered in a consistent and timely fashion, including improved access to age appropriate units. Last year, the Executive introduced a new **Standard Operating Procedure** for both in-patient and community CAMHS services. This has contributed to improving services overall, including reducing inappropriate admissions of adolescents to adult units. It is designed also to reduce CAMHS Waiting Lists, particularly for those waiting over 12 months.

Bearing in mind all the circumstances, I am satisfied that the HSE is making real progress in relation to the issues raised by the Deputy, while taking account of the wishes of each young person, their parents or guardians, and the complexities of each case. In many instances, a multi-disciplinary or inter-agency approach is required. The Department will continue to closely monitor this issue, in conjunction with the HSE, to ensure that the various new initiatives now underway, will contribute to improving CAMHS services, including the rate of age appropriate admissions across all regions.

Primary Care Centres Provision

142. **Deputy Kate O’Connell** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in establishing a primary care centre in the Royal Hospital in Donnybrook, County Dublin; the steps he is taking to address this delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8828/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The HSE has responsibility for the provision and operation of Primary Care Centres. Therefore, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this issue. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my private office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Medical Card Administration

143. **Deputy Kate O’Connell** asked the Minister for Health the savings made since the withdrawal of medical cards from adults following a diagnosis of cancer, in tabular form; if the cost of processing and rejecting applicants now outstrips the cost of removing that automatic entitlement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8829/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Under the provisions of the Health Act 1970, as amended, the assessment for a medical card is determined primarily by reference to the means, including the income and expenditure, of the applicant and his or her partner and dependants. I can clarify to the Deputy that the health legislation does not have a provision for the HSE to award a medical card to persons by virtue of an illness or a medical condition. However, where an applicant’s means are above the qualifying financial thresholds, the HSE routinely examines for indications of medical or social circumstances which might result in undue financial hardship in arranging medical services and, exercising discretion, may grant eligibility for a medical card on this basis.

The Deputy may be aware of the “Keane” Report of the *Expert Panel on Medical Need for Medical Card Eligibility*, which made a recommendation that a person’s means should remain the main qualifier for a medical card. It also recommended that it is neither feasible nor desirable to list conditions in priority order for medical card eligibility.

I would like to advise the Deputy that it is important to note that where a medical card is withdrawn - irrespective of its having been awarded based solely on means or where the HSE has exercised discretion - it is not withdrawn due on the cost implications for the HSE. In accordance with the Health Acts, a medical card can only be withdrawn due to eligibility not having been established.

As the medical condition of the applicant is not a factor in the assessment process for medical cards under the National Assessment Guidelines, the HSE does not record data on the GMS Database of this nature.

Ambulance Service

144. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health to re-evaluate the way in which the ambulance service is co-ordinated, with a view to delivering the control from a central national centre to regional centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8834/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The National Ambulance Service has undertaken a major programme of reform in recent years, to reconfigure the management and delivery of pre-hospital care services, for a clinically driven, nationally co-ordinated system, supported by improved technology. A core part of this programme has been the rationalisation

of the NAS command and control function from local regional centres to one national centre, the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC), operating across two sites in Dublin and Ballyshannon.

The establishment of the NEOC was undertaken in order to ensure that the ambulance service operates as a national fleet, rather than in regional divisions. Staff working in the NEOC operate using an integrated platform which enables them to have sight of every ambulance resource in the country. This means that they can deploy resources accordingly and ensure that the nearest available resource is dispatched to the patient within minutes of receipt of the call. This level of co-ordination and deployment of resources was not possible under the localised regional call centre configuration which existed previously.

The service is moving away from the model of care where services are provided to a local area from a fixed ambulance base located in that area, and moving to a model of strategic deployment, where paramedics and advanced paramedics are deployed in a manner which ensures that practitioners with the appropriate skill level are located strategically to provide optimum cover. Cover is provided across the Southern region from NAS bases in Killarney, Dingle, Listowel, Cahirciveen, Kenmare and Tralee. Resources are deployed to incidents as required in accordance with the system of Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch Protocols and are not confined to a specific geographic area.

Ambulance Service Provision

145. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health to provide County Kerry with two additional ambulances, as the county is currently critically under-serviced in regards to ambulance cover; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8835/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Medical Card Appeals

146. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied) under the medical card scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8836/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently issued to Oireachtas members.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he should contact my Private Office which will follow up the matter with the HSE.

Hospital Appointments Delays

147. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment at the Midland Regional Hospital in Tullamore in County Offaly. [8838/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Appointments Delays

148. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment at Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin in County Dublin [8839/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the specific issues raised are a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Mental Health Services Data

149. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons under 18 years of age being treated in adult mental health facilities, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8864/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If the Deputy has not received a reply within 15 working days, he should contact my Private Office and it will follow up the matter with the HSE.

Hospital Waiting Lists

150. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of elective surgeries that have been cancelled in Beaumont Hospital in County Dublin since 1 January 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8868/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the

matter up.

Mental Health Services Staff

151. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of mental health posts that were filled in 2015 and in 2016 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8869/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If the Deputy has not received a reply within 15 working days, he should contact my Private Office and it will follow up the matter with the HSE.

Primary Care Centres Provision

152. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health when the new Corduff health care centre will open in County Dublin; the number of persons who will be employed there; how persons can apply for these jobs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8874/16]

163. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the status of the opening of the primary care centre in Corduff in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8961/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 152 and 163 together.

The HSE has responsibility for the provision and operation of Primary Care Centres. Therefore, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this issue. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he should contact my private office and it will follow up the matter with the HSE.

Psychological Services

153. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting for a first appointment with a psychologist, following referral, for one month, two, three, three-plus-to-six, six-plus-to-nine, nine-plus-to-12, and 12-plus months, by local health area, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8878/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If the Deputy has not received a reply within 15 working days, he should contact my Private Office and it will follow up the matter with the HSE.

Primary Care Centres Provision

154. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health when construction will commence on the new health centre in Ballymote in County Sligo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8901/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Ballymote Primary Care Centre project is one of 14 to be delivered as a single PPP project. Following a detailed tender evaluation process the National Development Finance Agency announced the Prime-Balfour Beatty consortium as the preferred tenderer in May 2015. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2016 and it is expected that the primary care centres will be delivered in 2017. In the meantime work is continuing on the financial and legal provisions of the project contract.

Hospitals Data

155. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the number of cataract operations performed at the South Infirmity Victoria University Hospital in County Cork in 2015 on patients from County Kerry and from County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8904/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In relation to the detailed queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service matters, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Medical Card Applications

156. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the medical card scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8905/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently issued to Oireachtas members.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Beds Data

157. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which spare wards or beds capacity has existed at any of the general hospitals that experience overcrowding in accident and emergency departments in the past number of weeks; the steps he has taken to address this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8912/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Emergency Department Taskforce Implementation Group has met on a regular basis during 2015 and into 2016, and recently met on the 18th April 2016. The Group has been overseeing initiatives to address ED overcrowding and ED performance, particularly over this peak winter period.

Measures implemented included optimising discharges in advance of the weekends, strengthening the senior decision making presence at wards and in Emergency Departments, increased diagnostics at the weekends and securing staff to open overflow areas. As a result of these measures, the ED performance over the Easter period was favourable compared with 2015.

During 2015, additional funding of €117 million was provided to the HSE to relieve ED overcrowding pressures. This funding has supported initiatives to expand hospital capacity with 364 additional beds opened or reopened, reduce the number of hospital attendances by expanding community intervention team services and increasing the availability of community hospitals, and support timely patient discharge from hospital by reducing the wait time for Fair Deal funding to no more than 4 weeks, providing additional transitional care places, public community beds and home care packages.

Since the beginning of 2016, the HSE has reported an increase in emergency department (ED) activity in comparison with the same period last year. Overall, there has been an increase of 6.9% in patient attendances. Despite sustained increase in attendances, the total year to date number of patients waiting on trolleys at 8am each morning shows a marginal increase of 1%.

This year, the HSE is focusing on a number of key activities to manage waiting lists more effectively, thereby improving patient waiting times. These include:

- ensuring that chronological scheduling is adhered to;
- putting in place administrative and clinical validation procedures to ensure that patients are available for treatment;
- relocating high-volume low complexity surgeries to smaller hospitals; and
- designating an improvement lead for each hospital group, to provide support in meeting national targets for appointments and treatment.

Hospital Waiting Lists

158. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the degree to which he can reduce waiting times for elective procedures in hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8913/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Improving waiting times for scheduled care for patients is a key priority. In January 2015, I put in place maximum permissible waiting times for in-patient and day case treatment and outpatient appointments of 18 months by 30 Jun 2015 and 15 months by year end. The HSE was provided with additional funding to ensure that these maximum waiting times would be achieved by maximising capacity across public and voluntary hospitals as well as outsourcing activity where the capacity is not available to meet patient needs. HSE figures for end December 2015 show positive progress against the 15 months maximum wait time. For in-patient and day case waiting lists, overall performance equates to 95% achievement of the 15 month maximum permissible wait time and for outpatient waiting lists, overall performance equates to 93% achievement of the 15 month maximum permissible wait time.

This year, the HSE will focus on a number of activities to manage patient waiting times, including:

- ensuring that chronological scheduling is adhered to;
- putting in place administrative and clinical validation procedures to ensure that patients are available for treatment;
- relocating high-volume low complexity surgeries to smaller hospitals;
- outsourcing a percentage of patients where there is limited capacity to treat them in the public system; and
- designating an improvement lead for each hospital group, to provide support in meeting national targets for appointments and treatment.

Hospital Services

159. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the status of Beaumont Hospital in County Dublin and services (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8926/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

160. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) who is awaiting a place in the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dún Laoghaire will be granted a place. [8941/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Medical Card Data

161. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical cards holders, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8945/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible. The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently issued to Oireachtas members. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Waiting Lists

162. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health why a person (details supplied) who was put on the waiting list for a surgery in the Mater public hospital in County Dublin on March 2015 and was due to have surgery in the third week of April 2016 has still not received this important surgery. [8955/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, 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 HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Question No. 163 answered with Question No. 152.

Prescriptions Charges

164. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his proposals on the abolition of medical card prescription charges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8977/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Prescription charges are part of a set of measures introduced by Government in recent years to reduce pharmaceutical drugs expenditure. Medical card holders are required to pay a prescription charge of €2.50 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 Health Service Executive, asylum seekers living in direct provision, or to methadone supplied to patients participating in the Methadone Treatment Scheme.

There are no plans to amend the prescription charge; however, the charge remains frozen at the level set in 2014.

Home Care Packages

165. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health if he and representatives from the Health Service Executive will meet as a matter of urgency with Family Carers Ireland to discuss recent cuts, the reduction in home care hours and changes to home care packages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8978/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Requests for

meetings are normally arranged through my Office. Accordingly I would suggest a representative of the delegation should make contact with my office at, ministers_office@health.gov.ie.

Services and requests to meet with the Health Service Executive are an operational matter and has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage

166. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health his plans to have coeliac patients covered under the long-term illness scheme. [8979/16]

167. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health his plans to have some coeliac foods made available free for patients with medical cards. [8980/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 166 and 167 together.

The Long Term Illness (LTI) Scheme was established under Section 59(3) of the Health Act, 1970 (as amended). Regulations were made in 1971, 1973 and 1975 specifying the conditions covered by the LTI Scheme, which are as follows: acute leukaemia; mental handicap; cerebral palsy; mental illness (in a person under 16); cystic fibrosis; multiple sclerosis; diabetes insipidus; muscular dystrophies; diabetes mellitus; parkinsonism; epilepsy; phenylketonuria; haemophilia; spina bifida; hydrocephalus; and conditions arising from the use of Thalidomide. There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the LTI Scheme.

The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicinal products under the community drug schemes in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

The HSE faces a continuing challenge to deliver services in a way that will minimise any adverse impact on patients and continue to protect, as far as possible, the most vulnerable citizens. Unfortunately, as a result it has become necessary for the HSE to suspend certain products from its list of items reimbursable under the GMS and other community drug schemes. This includes gluten-free products.

Gluten-free products have become more widely available in supermarkets in recent years and tend to be significantly cheaper than products sold through community pharmacies. Coeliac patients can also claim medical expenses tax relief on expenditure incurred on gluten-free products manufactured specifically for coeliacs. There are no plans to reinstate these products on the list of reimbursable items under the GMS and other community drug schemes.

Health Services Provision

168. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of full-time residential care for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8993/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

169. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when he will appoint a second paediatrics endocrinologist at University Hospital Limerick to cater for the growing needs of young persons with diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8996/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Services

170. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health why he removed the intermediate care vehicle for Mallow in County Cork given that it was put in place following the closure of the emergency department at Mallow General Hospital; the emergency care provision he has put in its place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8997/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

171. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for the appointment at University Hospital Limerick of nine nurses, nine podiatrists and 18 dietitians to support type 2 diabetes patients, given that these appointments are contained in the 2016 Health Service Executive business plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8998/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Waiting Lists

172. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for surgery for a person (details supplied). [9001/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, 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 HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Waiting Lists

173. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied with the bed management systems that are allowing for the cancellation of surgeries to help alleviate the trolley crisis in emergency departments, despite the fact that these beds on surgical wards cannot be used by trolley patients due to the danger posed from infection to post-operative patients on these surgical wards, thereby adding to surgical waiting lists and maintaining the trolley crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9004/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Emergency Department Taskforce Implementation Group has been overseeing initiatives to address ED performance and overcrowding. These initiatives include optimising discharges in advance of the weekends, strengthening the senior decision making presence at wards and in EDs, increased access to diagnostics and securing staff to open overflow areas.

During 2015, additional funding of €117 million was provided to the HSE to relieve ED overcrowding pressures. This funding has supported initiatives to expand hospital capacity with 364 additional beds opened or reopened, reduce the number of hospital attendances by expanding community intervention team services and increasing the availability of community hospitals, and support timely patient discharge from hospital by reducing the wait time for Fair Deal funding to no more than 4 weeks, providing additional transitional care places, public community beds and home care packages.

Since the beginning of 2016, the HSE has reported an increase of 6.9% in patient attendances in comparison with the same period last year. However, the total year to date number of patients waiting on trolleys at 8am each morning has shown a marginal increase of 1%.

This year, the HSE is focusing on a number of key activities to manage waiting lists more effectively, thereby improving patient waiting times. These include; ensuring that chronological scheduling is adhered to, putting in place validation procedures to ensure that patients are available for treatment, relocating high-volume low complexity surgeries to smaller hospitals; and designating an improvement lead for each hospital group.

With respect to possible underutilisation of surgical beds, the ED escalation framework states that reviews of elective admissions should be carried out by hospital management in consultation with the relevant consultant. It is only at Stage 3 of escalation that all admissions are to be carried out through the Emergency Department and that elective surgeries are cancelled.

Stage 3 requires that elective staff are redeployed to assist with patient flow through the ED. This can impact on staffing and bed capacity in surgical wards. Taking into account the immediate and short term predictable demand/capacity scenario, decisions on hospital admissions and bed management have to be taken with regard to the safe operating limits of the hospital as a whole and in the interests of patient care.

Hospital Services

174. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health when he will make staffing

resources available to make the magnetic resonance imaging scanner fully operational in University Hospital Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9008/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Waiting Lists

175. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9010/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, 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 HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Assisted Human Reproduction Services Provision

176. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide fertility treatment for couples free of charge on the first occasion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9012/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): On Monday 1 February, I announced my intention to provide public funding for assisted human reproduction (AHR) treatment in conjunction with the planned introduction of legislation in this area. It is important that consideration be given to how best to provide public funding for fertility treatment in conjunction with closing the legislative gap in this area of healthcare. To that end, my officials are currently drafting a General Scheme of legislative provisions dealing with AHR.

I have commissioned an evidence review of international public funding models. The review will inform policy regarding the ideal mechanism for any future public funding of AHR in the State. It is expected that the evidence review will be completed before the end of 2016 and that once the AHR legislation is enacted the Government will be in a position to provide fertility treatments based on the best model of funding for Ireland.

It is important to note that while in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment is not provided by the Irish public health service, there is some support available in that patients who access IVF treatment privately may claim tax relief on the costs involved under the tax relief for medical expenses scheme. In addition, a defined list of fertility medicines needed for fertility treatment

is covered under the High Tech Scheme administered by the Health Service Executive (HSE). Medicines covered by the High Tech Scheme must be prescribed by a consultant/specialist and approved by the HSE 'High Tech Liaison Officers'. The cost of the medicines is then covered, as appropriate, under the Medical Card or Drugs Payment Scheme.

Hospital Waiting Lists

177. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9017/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, 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 HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Waiting Lists

178. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when an operation at Tal-laght hospital will be facilitated for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9028/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, 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 HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Drugs Payment Scheme Coverage

179. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if there is a means test available whereby money spent on the maintenance of a sleep apnoea machine can be offset against moneys spent under the drugs payment scheme if a case where a person (details supplied) purchases above the top limit of €144 per month but does not receive the full payment in refunds for money spent on prescriptions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9029/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the primary care schemes, therefore the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to you.

If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Appointments Status

180. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the case of a person (details supplied), including when the person will receive an appointment from the Health Service Executive. [9034/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Waiting Lists

181. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied) for surgery in Our Lady's Hospital, Navan, County Meath. [9045/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, 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 HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Services

182. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 879 of 9 June 2015, wherein the reply clearly states that an overall review of antenatal arrangements was initiated by the clinical directorate, why, following a freedom of information request in which access to all written records pertaining to this review was sought, the request was refused on the grounds that the documentation being requested did not exist; the nature of the review which did take place; if written documentation is available in respect of the review carried out in relation to antenatal service provision; if such records are available; if he will release these; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9048/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): A search of the Department's FOI database was carried out and no such request, referred to by the Deputy could be found.

It may be that the request referred to, was sent to the Health Service Executive (HSE). Statutory responsibility for the HSE's compliance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act rests with the HSE.

Freedom of Information legislation provides a right of appeal for requesters, in circumstances where records have been refused under any of the exemption provisions of the legislation.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

183. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9049/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, 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 HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Health Services

184. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health the status of regulating psychotherapy and counselling. [9052/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The regulation of the 14 professions currently designated under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 is being implement-

ed on a phased basis as the registration board and register for each profession is established. Currently 9 of the 14 designated professions have registration boards and registers have been established for 7 of them.

Psychotherapists and counsellors are not currently regulated under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005. However, the Act provides that the Minister for Health may, by regulation, designate a health and social care profession not already designated if he or she considers that it is appropriate and in the public interest to do so and if specified criteria have been met.

In accordance with the Act, the Health and Social Care Professionals Council has been consulted on the question of regulating counsellors and psychotherapists. Its detailed report on the matter is being examined carefully in the Department of Health with a view to deciding the next steps in the coming months. These steps will, I envisage, include a wider round of consultation involving the various professional bodies and other interested parties.

While the profession or professions of counsellor and psychotherapist are not specifically designated under the 2005 Act, there are various regulatory controls on many counsellors and psychotherapists operating in Ireland.

The profession of psychologist, for example, is a designated profession under the 2005 Act which means that those psychologists who are counsellors and/or psychotherapists will begin to be regulated when the Psychologists Registration Board, which is due to be established later this year, opens its register.

Psychiatrists, some of whom practice psychotherapy, are regulated under the Medical Practitioners Act 2007. Also, counsellors/therapists working in the publicly funded health sector are required to have minimum qualifications set by the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

185. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9055/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Medical Aids and Appliances Applications

186. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for a device by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9068/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the particular issue raised relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to you. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Appointments Status

187. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health to expedite an appointment for a person (details supplied) in University Hospital Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9070/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Health Services Provision

188. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health to expedite treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9072/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Mental Health Services Data

189. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and young persons awaiting appointments in the child and adolescent mental health services in Dublin North, for six, 12, 18, 24, and 24 plus months in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9076/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a reply within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Disability Services Data

190. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting appointments for disability services in Dublin North for six, 12, 18, 24, and 24 plus months by service, including physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, and occupational therapy in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9077/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the

Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, she can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Treatment Abroad Scheme

191. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health if an application by a person (details supplied) for treatment abroad, as recommended by the person's doctor, will be re-examined by a medical assessor; and if the application will be granted. [9079/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The HSE operates the Treatment Abroad Scheme (TAS) for persons entitled to treatment in another EU/EEA Member State or Switzerland under EU Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004, as per the procedures set out in EU Regulations (EC) No. 987/2009, and in accordance with Department of Health Guidelines. Patients apply to the HSE TAS seeking access to public healthcare outside the State through model form E112. The application requires the patient's Irish-based public referring hospital consultant, following clinical assessment, to certify, among other things, that the treatment is medically necessary and will meet the patient's needs. The treatment must not be available within the State or not available within a time normally necessary for obtaining it.

The HSE has advised that, in the case detailed by the Deputy, an application under the Scheme was assessed and a decision letter issued to the patient and her referring consultant which identified how the application did not meet the criteria of the Scheme. The letter set out the appeals process in respect of the decision on the application, including the recommendation when making an appeal to submit all supporting clinical information of relevance to the case. Members of the TAS office have subsequently spoken with the patient and again outlined the appeals process and also gave the patient advice on the options of making a new application or applying for care under the Cross Border Healthcare Directive. The HSE has further advised that a formal appeal of the decision has yet to be received.

Departmental Reports

192. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health why he has not made available a report which was completed in January 2015 by consultant academics from universities in Cardiff, Wales and Dundee, Scotland (details supplied); why the Health Service Executive has declined an application made under the Freedom of Information Act to have a copy of the report furnished to a person who has requested it; if he will instruct the Health Service Executive to make the report available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9082/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The HSE is currently investigating concerns raised by clinicians in relation to Orthodontic Services provided in the Dublin area during the period 1999 to 2001. A review team has been established and the concerns raised are being dealt with in accordance with HSE protocols. Part of the process involves a review by external consultants of the available clinical records and information for that period. As the matter is not yet concluded, the HSE have informed that the release of partial information relating to the concern would not be helpful to the overall objective. It is the HSE's intention to publish a full report on the matter as soon as the investigation is concluded, and this will include material provided to the process by the external consultants. A report is expected by summer 2016.

Hospital Waiting Lists

193. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when he will provide an operation for a person (details supplied); and the reason for the delay. [9083/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, 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 HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

194. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in supplying a suitable replacement device for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9084/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the particular issue raised relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to you. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Ministerial Correspondence

195. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Health the details of correspondence between the Alliance of Health Care Assistants in Ireland and him from January 2015 to 23 April 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9100/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): A search of correspondence tracking systems within my Office and that of Minister Lynch has not revealed any correspondence from this organisation. However, I will check with all units within the Department and if there is any relevant correspondence, details will be forwarded to you as soon as possible.

Early Childhood Care and Education

196. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the status of special needs assistants and Montessori schools; his views on correspondence regarding a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9110/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme is the responsibility of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has brought forward a new model of supports to facilitate the full participation of children with a disability in the ECCE Programme. The new model will provide supports including enhanced continuing professional development for early years practitioners; grants for equipment, appliances and minor alterations; and access to therapeutic intervention. Funding of €15m has been provided to phase these supports in during 2016. Full year costs for these supports are estimated to be €33m from 2017 onwards. This model of supports was launched on 18 November last by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs with my full support and the support of my Government colleague Jan O’Sullivan T.D., Minister for Education and Skills.

Improving access to therapy services for children in primary care and in disability services is a particular priority for the Government. Building on additional investment in recent years, funding of €8m is being provided to the HSE in 2016 to expand the provision of Speech and Language Therapy in primary care and the further development of early intervention therapy services under the Progressing Disabilities Programme to facilitate the inclusion of children with a disability in mainstream pre-school settings, as part of the roll-out of the new inclusive preschools model.

It should be noted that while the Health Service Executive has no statutory obligation to provide assistant supports for children with special needs wishing to avail of the ECCE scheme, it has, to date, worked at local level and in partnership with the relevant disability service providers to address individual needs as they arise. This has been done, for example, by funding special pre-schools that cater specifically for children with disabilities. In some limited and specific cases at local level, disability services have in the past also facilitated children with a disability to attend mainstream pre-schools by providing additional supports where possible and where resources are available. The provision of such additional pre-school supports should not be confused with Special Needs Assistants, who are funded by the Department of Education and Skills to support children with special educational needs in primary and post-primary school settings.

Within this context, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy in relation to the individual case she has raised. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

197. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the status of the lack of a cystic fibrosis consultant in the Children’s University Hospital in Temple Street in Dublin 1 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9111/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the specific issues raised are a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Appointments Status

198. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment from Galway University Hospital; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [9115/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Appointments Status

199. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9116/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Procedures

200. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9118/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Deputy's question relates to service delivery matters and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Groups

201. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health to clarify the various hospital groups which were established in terms of movement of staff between two groups; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9120/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Seven hospital groups, including the Children's Hospital Group, have been established on a non-statutory administrative basis and are set out in the following table.

No.	Composition
i	RCSI (Dublin North East): Beaumont Hospital; Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda; Connolly Hospital; Cavan General Hospital; Rotunda Hospital; Louth County Hospital; Monaghan Hospital. (Academic Partner: RCSI).
ii	Dublin Midlands: St James's Hospital; The Adelaide & Meath Hospital, Dublin, including the National Children's Hospital; Midlands Regional Hospital, Tullamore; Naas General Hospital; Midlands Regional Hospital Portlaoise; the Coombe Women & Infant University Hospital. (Academic Partner: TCD).
iii	Ireland East (Dublin East): Mater Misericordiae University Hospital; St Vincent's University Hospital; Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar; St Luke's General Hospital, Kilkenny; Wexford General Hospital; National Maternity Hospital; Our Lady's Hospital, Navan; St Columcille's Hospital; St Michael's Hospital, Dun Laoghaire; Cappagh National Orthopaedic Hospital; Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital. (Academic Partner: UCD).
iv	South/South West: Cork University Hospital/CUMH; Waterford Regional Hospital; Kerry General Hospital; Mercy University Hospital; South Tipperary General Hospital; South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital; Bantry General Hospital; Mallow General Hospital, Lourdes Orthopaedic Hospital, Kilcreene. (Academic Partner: UCC).
v	Saolta University Health Care (West / North West): University Hospital Galway; Merlin Park University Hospital; Sligo Regional Hospital; Letterkenny General Hospital; Mayo General Hospital; Portiuncula Hospital Ballinasloe; Roscommon Hospital. (Academic Partner: NUIG).
vi	UL Hospitals (Midwest): University Hospital Limerick; Ennis Hospital; Nenagh Hospital; St John's Hospital Limerick; University Maternity Hospital Limerick; Croom Orthopaedic Hospital. (Academic Partner: UL).
vii	Children's Hospital Group: The acute paediatric services in Dublin; Our Lady's Children's Hospital - Crumlin, Children's University Hospital Temple Street, and the paediatric service in AMNCH – Tallaght. (Academic Partner: All Universities)

In relation to the particular query raised on staff within the Hospital Groups, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

HIQA Remit

202. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the Health Information and Quality Authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9121/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) started to regulate residential services for people with disabilities on 1 November 2013, pursuant to Statutory Instrument No. 366 of 2013 and Statutory Instrument No. 367 of 2013, which assign responsibility to HIQA for registering and inspecting residential services for children and adults with disabilities, including respite services.

HIQA has advised the Department that speaking to residents and their representatives, including family members, is an important part of its inspection process. In advance of registration inspections, HIQA sends posters and information leaflets to registered centres so that residents and their families are aware that inspectors will be there should they wish to speak to them. Because of the nature of unannounced inspections, it is not possible to give residents or their families advance notice of the inspection; however, inspectors are always interested and willing to hear the views of families. There have been instances where families were not able to meet inspectors at the time of inspection but have phoned HIQA and spoken to inspectors at a later date.

The views of residents are very important in any inspection and inspectors seek opportunities to speak to residents. Where residents are not able to verbally express their views, inspectors spend time with them observing the quality of their day-to-day interactions and supports. Inspectors consider the views of residents when making their findings; however, HIQA also acknowledges that the resident's voice in inspection reports could be enhanced. HIQA is currently reviewing how it reports on the findings of its inspections, particularly in this regard.

Nursing Home Accommodation Provision

203. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health why a place in a nursing home for a person (details supplied) was cancelled at the last minute; if he will find another place for the person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9125/16]

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. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Appointments Status

204. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9126/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Medicinal Products Regulation

205. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the status of the approval of the drug VIMIZIM for the illness Morquio, including if he will approve it for the public health

service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9132/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicinal products under the community drug schemes in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. Prior to reimbursing any medicine, the HSE considers a range of statutory criteria, including clinical need, cost-effectiveness and the resources available to the HSE.

The decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds by the HSE on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE). They are not political or ministerial decisions. The NCPE conducts the health technology assessment of pharmaceutical products for the HSE, and can make recommendations on reimbursement to assist the HSE in its decision-making process.

The HSE has received an application for the inclusion of Elosulfase alfa (brand name Vimizim) in the GMS and community drugs schemes; the application is currently being considered under the national medicines pricing and reimbursement assessment process. As the assessment process is ongoing, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on this process, which is an independent function of the HSE.

Hospital Appointments Status

206. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the case of a person (details supplied) including when the person will receive an appointment in the Midland Regional Hospital in Tullamore, County Offaly. [9133/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Appointments Status

207. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the case of a person (details supplied) including when the person will receive an appointment in the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital in Dublin 2. [9139/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient

has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Mental Health Services Provision

208. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health when elderly mental health services provided by the Health Service Executive in County Donegal will commence, given that they were cancelled earlier in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9142/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a reply within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Waiting Lists

209. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for surgery for a person (details supplied) in Our Lady's Hospital in Navan in County Meath. [9147/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, 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 HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Admissions

210. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be admitted to the National Rehabilitation Hospital in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9148/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will

follow the matter up with the HSE.

Medical Card Applications

211. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health to expedite an application by a person (details supplied) under the medical card scheme. [9149/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently issued to Oireachtas members.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Waiting Lists

212. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting orthopaedic appointments at each relevant hospital; the waiting times in each hospital for those graded as routine and those graded as urgent and who are already on the waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9150/16]

213. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting time for an orthopaedic appointment at each relevant hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9151/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 212 and 213 together.

As these are service matters, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Waiting Lists

214. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to address waiting times for orthopaedic appointments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9152/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual. The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred.

In 2016, the HSE is focusing on a number of key activities to manage waiting lists more ef-

fectively, thereby improving patient waiting times. These include:

- ensuring that chronological scheduling is adhered to;
- putting in place administrative and clinical validation procedures to ensure that patients are available for treatment;
- relocating high-volume low complexity surgeries to smaller hospitals; and
- designating an improvement lead for each hospital group, to provide support in meeting national targets for appointments and treatment

Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

215. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health to provide a timeline on the promised refurbishment of St. Patrick's Hospital in Carrick-On-Shannon, County Leitrim. [9154/16]

216. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health to provide a timeline on the promised refurbishment of the Sacred Heart Home in County Roscommon. [9155/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 215 and 216 together.

As these are service matters they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Cancer Services Provision

217. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons undergoing treatment for cancer at all public hospitals in each month of 2015, in tabular form. [9159/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Deputy's question relates to service delivery matters and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to her.

If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter with them.

Cancer Services Provision

218. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons undergoing chemotherapy treatment for cancer at all public hospitals in each month of 2015, in tabular form. [9160/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Deputy's question relates to service delivery matters and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to her.

4 May 2016

If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Services

219. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health why a person (details supplied) has not been issued with a date for an operation, given that numerous letters have been sent to the hospital by the person's general practitioner confirming the urgency of this operation. [9162/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Deputy's question relates to service delivery matters and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Services

220. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a review into ante-natal and gynaecology services at Dungloe Community Hospital, County Donegal, will be carried out; the reason such a review has not yet taken place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9163/16]

221. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when he will reinstate ante-natal and gynaecology services at Dungloe Community Hospital in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9164/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 220 and 221 together.

With regard to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service matters, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Mental Health Services

222. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the proposals he has to provide additional financial resources in 2016 for the mental health services in counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9165/16]

223. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the proposals he has to extend mental health services in counties Cavan and Monaghan in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9166/16]

224. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the proposals he has to provide new facilities in 2016 for the provision of mental health services in counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9167/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 222 to 224, inclusive, together.

As this is a service matter these questions have been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a reply within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Mental Health Services Provision

225. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if eligibility criteria for assessment by child psychiatry will be re-examined for a person (details supplied). [9168/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a reply within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Waiting Lists

226. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of public waiting lists for persons with cancer (details supplied) in respect of a recent survey; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9177/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The report to which the Deputy refers, ‘Access to Diagnostics Used to Detect Cancer’, was published by the Irish Cancer Society and the Irish College of General Practitioners and it focuses on access to diagnostics rather than on treatment and outcomes. A finding of the report was that people who have private health insurance can access diagnostic services more quickly than those in the public system. The report also states that ‘there were no significant findings when comparing average delay in the public system to distance from GP practice to nearest hospital for referral’.

The report acknowledges the significant contribution to cancer control in Ireland arising from the establishment of the National Cancer Control Programme, the designation of cancer centres and the development of rapid access clinics for patients with suspected breast, prostate and lung cancers.

Hospital Waiting Lists

227. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health to ensure that a person (details supplied) who is in urgent need of an operation and has been on the waiting list for surgery and treatment is immediately admitted for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9187/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, 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 sched-

uled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Foreign Conflicts

228. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to outline the support Ireland is providing to the Kurdish people in Turkey, given that the Kurdish population in Turkey has been under bombardment from the Turkish state since the breakdown of the peace process in 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8870/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The domestic situation in Turkey remains a matter of concern, both for Ireland and our European partners. I would like to reiterate the serious concern I have expressed several times already in this House at the escalation of violence since the breakdown of the ceasefire between the Turkish Government and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) last summer. This breakdown has been all the more regrettable given that there were positive signs in the peace process as recently as early 2015.

Ireland has been a strong supporter of the peace talks between the Turkish Government and the PKK and, through the work of the Conflict Resolution Unit of my Department, financial assistance has been provided to an international NGO which has facilitated study visits to Ireland by Turkish and Kurdish MPs, journalists, and advisers working for peace. The current situation demonstrates clearly the critical importance for all sides to cease hostilities and return to dialogue and I take this opportunity to urge again all sides to do so. The most recent Progress Report on Turkey, published by the European Commission in November 2015, emphasised the importance of this too.

The issue of human rights in Turkey has also been raised by the Taoiseach at the European Council.

Officials in my Department, both at headquarters in Dublin and in our Embassy in Ankara, will continue to follow developments in Turkey very closely.

EU Migration Crisis

229. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has raised at European Union or United Nations level the question of Turkey's status as a safe state for refugees being overturned; the efforts being made to stop the process of refugees being returned to Turkey; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8871/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Turkey has a key role to play in resolving the current migration crisis, as most of the migrants and refugees who have entered the EU since early 2015 have travelled via Turkey. The EU and Turkey have engaged deeply on developing joint approaches and the EU's engagement with Turkey was the focus of the most recent European Council on 17 and 18 March 2016.

The core intention of the EU-Turkey agreement which emerged from the Council is to break the business model of the people smugglers who are profiting from the suffering of the vulnerable. Critically, it should stop people getting into unsafe boats and risking their lives. The need

to comply with international law was at the heart of the discussions leading to the Agreement.

All migrants will be protected in accordance with the relevant international standards and in respect of the principle of *non-refoulement*. The EU and Turkey have agreed that there will be no blanket returns and no automatic returns of asylum seekers: all migrants/refugees arriving in Greece who wish to claim asylum will have their applications processed individually by the Greek authorities in accordance with the Asylum Procedures Directive, in cooperation with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). In addition, the €3 billion Facility for refugees in Turkey is aimed at supporting Syrians and other refugees by providing access to food, shelter, education, and healthcare. This funding has been accelerated and, as of 19 April, €187 million has been committed to the Facility.

Steps to address the migration challenge are also continuing outside of the EU-Turkey framework. In addition to the humanitarian aid provided by Ireland, we agreed last year to accept up to 4,000 migrants, despite our opt-out from EU legislation in the area of freedom, security and justice. Last year the Irish Naval service rescued 8,592 migrants from the Mediterranean Sea.

More broadly, the issue of human rights in Turkey has been raised by the Taoiseach at the European Council and continues to form an integral part of the country's Enlargement process.

EU Membership

230. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has expressed concerns at European Union level regarding Turkey's application for membership of the European Union, given the human rights abuses being carried out against the people of Kurdistan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8872/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Ireland supports the accession of Turkey to the EU. However, the domestic situation in Turkey remains a matter of concern, both for Ireland and our European partners and I would like to reiterate the serious concern I have expressed several times already in this House at the escalation of violence since the breakdown of the ceasefire between the Turkish Government and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) last summer. The Government also remains concerned at the broader situation of fundamental freedoms in Turkey, particularly with regard to freedom of expression and the media.

Both rule of law and human rights issues are, of course, an integral part of the EU accession process and this was highlighted in the most recent Progress Report on Turkey, which was published by the European Commission in November 2015. The Government has been consistently clear that all criteria and benchmarks in this process must be met. Ireland, along with our EU partners, will continue our dialogue with Turkey on these very important issues, including as part of the accession process.

International Relations

231. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of Ireland's plans to formally recognise the autonomous region of Kurdistan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8873/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Ireland continues to support the territorial integrity of Iraq and does not propose to intervene in internal consti-

tutional matters of Iraq, which are for decision by the Iraqi people and their democratically elected leaders.

Human Rights Issues

232. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade given the violence and murder inflicted by the Islamic State on Yazidis and Christians, his proposals to request the United Nations Security Council to refer this ongoing barbarity to the International Criminal Court; his views on whether this violence and murder classifies as genocide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9180/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have repeatedly condemned the horrific violence against all civilians in Syria and Iraq and have stated that there must also be legal accountability for victims of the Syrian conflict. In 2014 we co-sponsored a resolution calling for referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court which was vetoed by Russia and China. Our support for referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court remains unchanged. I would also note that the UN Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry has reported that the Assad regime is responsible for the majority of crimes against the Syrian people.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights concluded in his March 2015 report that, subject to a determination by an independent and competent court, ISIS may have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. We echo his call that, in order to provide accountability and justice for the victims, all crimes are investigated in line with international human rights standards, and perpetrators are brought to justice.

Determining the validity of claims of genocide by ISIS/Daesh is a matter which should be undertaken by a legally competent court. I believe that this is a matter for decision by the International Criminal Court.

SOLAS Training and Education Programmes

233. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her plans to provide training programmes through SOLAS to ensure that unemployed persons can become qualified bus drivers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9021/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): This is an operational matter for SOLAS. I have asked SOLAS to contact the Deputy directly to provide the information.

Oideachas Gaeilge

234. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an bhfuil sí toilteanach bualadh le coiste scoile (sonraí ar fáil) chun a n-iarratas ar Aonad a bhunú a phlé; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [8813/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Tá togra breithnithe ag mo Roinnse a rinne an Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna sa cheantar dá dtagraíonn an Teachta chun oideachas trí Ghaeilge a sholáthar ag an dara leibhéal trí Aonad a chur ar bun i scoil atá ann cheana. Tá molta ag an Roinn gur gá don mBord céanna athmhachnamh a dhéanamh ar an togra chun déileáil le roinnt nithe a bheadh ábhartha chun éascú le hoideachas a sholáthar trí mheán

na Gaeilge i mbealach níos sásúla agus níos inmharthana i gceantar freagrachta an Bhoird.

Tá oifigigh de chuid mo Roinnse tar éis teagmháil a dhéanamh ar an teileafón le déanaí le hionadaithe ó ghrúpa bunaithe na scoile agus tá molta acu dóibh gurb é an beart is cuí sa chás seo ná dul i gcomhairle leis an mBord arís maidir le hathmhachnamh ar an togra ar bhonn an mholta agus an tsoiléirithe atá faighte cheana ón Roinn. Tuigim go bhfuil cruinniú á shocrú leis an mBord. Beidh mo Roinnse sásta togra a mheá nuair a chuirfear faoi bhráid é.

Student Universal Support Ireland Administration

235. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she is aware of a problem in the Student Universal Support Ireland application process whereby the input of a number of days, along with weeks, in the sections dealing with income is not permissible, to allow for accurate figures to be provided in the totals section; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8817/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Assessment of means under my Department’s student grant scheme is based on gross income from all sources of the applicant and his/her parent(s)/legal guardian, where applicable, with certain social welfare and health service executive payments being exempt.

I understand from SUSI, that under the current application process, all income apart from Department of Social Protection (DSP) income, is required to be input as an annual amount. DSP income is required to be input as a weekly amount - the student is required to input the number of weeks and the amount per week received and the system calculates an annual figure from this information. There is no facility for entering the number of days a DSP payment has been received. This annual figure is an indicative figure and in all cases SUSI verify the actual amount received in the relevant period through its data sharing facility with the DSP.

SUSI are currently working towards an application process where the applicant will not have to provide figures relating to income at time of application. In the near future it is envisaged that the student would simply indicate that there is income from a particular source and SUSI would be able to verify the actual amount received in the relevant period through data sharing facilities with the relevant body that hold the information on the payment.

Special Educational Needs

236. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will reconsider a school’s (details supplied) application for resource hours for September as opposed to October in order that a person is not without special needs assistant support for over a month and can therefore begin school in September; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8823/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school. Where children have significant care needs whereby they may need additional support to be able to attend school, the NCSE may make an allocation of SNA support to the school to assist that child.

4 May 2016

The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support, which is set out in Circular 0030/2014.

All schools were asked to apply for SNA support for the 2016/17 school year by 29th February 2016. The NCSE continues to accept applications in recognition that enrolments may not have been completed or where assessments were not completed. The NCSE will consider these applications and make further allocations to schools in respect of valid applications which have been received to September.

The NCSE will advise all schools of their allocations for SNA support for 2016/17 before the end of the current school year. All schools have the contact details of their local SENO, while Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on *www.ncse.ie*.

Details of the manner in which a school, or parent, may appeal an SNA allocation decision is also available at *www.ncse.ie*.

As the Deputy's question relates to the allocation of SNA support by the NCSE to an individual school, I have referred this question to the NCSE for their consideration and direct reply to the Deputy.

School Patronage

237. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her plans for and progress in providing a multid denominational secondary school for the Terenure and Harold's Cross areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8830/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department completed demographic analyses at primary and post-primary level late last year, using the Department's Geographical Information System, to identify the areas under increased demographic pressure nationwide. The system uses data from the Central Statistics Office, Ordnance Survey Ireland, the Department of Social Protection and information from the Department's own databases. The outcome of these demographic analyses was that on 17 November 2015 I announced the establishment of 4 new primary schools and 9 new post-primary schools to open in 2017 and 2018, including a new post-primary school which will open in September 2018 to serve the Dublin South City Centre area, which includes the areas to which the Deputy refers.

The patronage determination process for new schools is a separate process, which is run after it is decided that, based on the demographic data, a new school is required. Parental preferences are central to this process and prospective patrons are required to provide evidence of demand for their particular type of school. It is open to all patrons, patron bodies and prospective patrons to apply for patronage of a new school under this process.

I am pleased to advise the Deputy that I have recently issued an invitation to all patron bodies and prospective school patron bodies to apply for the patronage of the nine new post primary schools including the school to serve Dublin South City Centre area. Details can be found on the Department of Education & Skills website at *www.education.ie*.

School Catchment Areas

238. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are enough school places available for entry to primary schools in the Carpenterstown area of

County Dublin; if the area is one of the areas experiencing increased demographic pressure as termed in response to Parliamentary Question No. 116 of 21 April 2016; if she will consider establishing another school to cater for the demographic needs in the Carpenterstown area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8843/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): As the Deputy will be aware my Department uses a Geographical Information System (GIS) to identify where the pressure for school places will arise. The GIS uses data from the Central Statistics Office, Ordnance Survey Ireland, the Department of Social Protection and information from my Department’s own databases.

The outcome of the latest demographic exercises, based on the GIS, is that on 17 November 2015, I announced the establishment of 13 new schools to open in 2017 and 2018 to cater for demographic needs.

As part of this announcement I noted that a number of areas nationwide are experiencing increased demographic pressures and the Department will keep the demographic data under ongoing review. For the Carpenterstown Dublin 15 school planning area, this review will take account of updated enrolment and child benefit data and also the impact of capacity increases in adjacent school planning areas. Once the review of the latest available data has been completed the matter of establishing new schools that will be required beyond 2018 can be considered.

School Enrolments

239. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views on the practice of primary schools seeking a non-refundable fee to hold places for children; if she supports this practice; and if she will consider taking measures to prevent this practice [8851/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): A key requirement for all recognised schools in the Free Education Scheme, is that the school does not operate a charge, in whatever form, that is in effect a mandatory fee and that is contrary to the principle of not charging fees. Voluntary contributions may be sought from parents, provided it is made clear to parents that there is no compulsion to pay and that a child’s place in the school or continued enrolment is not dependant on a willingness to make a contribution.

Registration fees are sometimes requested by schools in order to avoid “double booking” of pupils in schools. Under current arrangements, schools are allowed to request a booking fee/ registration fee when considering applicants for enrolment, provided this is refundable at all times following a decision on enrolment.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill, which was published in April of last year, contained a provision prohibiting the charging of fees or seeking payment or contributions as part of the school admission process or for continued enrolment in the school. Unfortunately, it was not possible to bring this complex piece of legislation through both Houses of the Oireachtas in the timeframe available. However, I have made it clear that a legislative framework for school admissions needs to be a priority for the next government.

Teaching Qualifications

240. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views on changes to regulation 3 which relates to the employment of Montessori and other categories

of teachers; if she will provide an assurance that teachers in this category will not be adversely affected by changes to the regulation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8852/16]

251. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to clarify the regulation changes being implemented by the Teaching Council with regard to removing regulation 3 which will result in Level 8 degree holders in Montessori Education being unable to teach in a special school setting or as a resource teacher in a mainstream setting. [8942/16]

252. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the up to date position regarding the proposed abolition of regulation 3, Montessori and other categories; if she will ensure that a fair and appropriate consultation will take place with the interested parties, particularly with the body of teachers trained by a college (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8957/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 240, 251 and 252 together.

The Teaching Council is the body with statutory responsibility and authority for regulation of the teaching profession including the registration of teachers under the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015.

The Teaching Council’s pathways to registration were set out initially in the Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations 2009, under which graduates with certain Montessori qualifications (Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications) met the requirements of Regulation 3 (Montessori and other categories).

Further to publication of its draft revised registration regulations to reflect current policy on teacher education in 2014 and significant stakeholder engagement, the Teaching Council intends to provide for persons currently registered with the Council under Regulation 3 on the basis of holding a level 8 Montessori qualification. The Council also intends to allow for the registration of persons who obtain a level 8 Montessori qualification, where the course was commenced on or before 1 October 2016 and the qualification obtained before the end of 2021.

The Department has no plans to change the current position whereby teachers who are registered with a level 8 Montessori qualification under Regulation 3 (or its equivalent in the new regulations) are eligible for employment as teachers of pupils with special education needs in recognised mainstream primary schools and special schools.

Schools Building Projects

241. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when she will issue a written decision to a school (details supplied) in County Wicklow regarding the building of an extra classroom; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8857/16]

242. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when she will issue a written decision to a school (details supplied) in County Wicklow regarding the upgrade of all the electrical systems across the school as part of the summer works scheme. [8858/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 241 and 242 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the school in question has submitted an application to my Department for additional accommodation. The application is currently being assessed and a

decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as this process has been finalised.

The Deputy will be aware that I announced details of the successful applicants under the Summer Works Scheme (2016-2017) on 28th April last, details of which are published on my Department's website, www.education.ie. €30 million of the €80 million announced for the multi-annual Summer Works Scheme (2016-2017) is now being allocated for vital gas works and electrical upgrades in schools. I am pleased to advise the Deputy that funding has been allocated to the school, to which he refers, to undertake electrical improvements. The school can access a written decision on my Department's on-line Esinet Portal.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland Accreditation

243. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when she will accredit a course (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8876/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the statutory body with responsibility for developing, promoting and maintaining the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

QQI is currently unable to progress applications for the recognition of professional awards within the NFQ due to an issue arising concerning the extent of QQI's powers under the Quality Assurance and Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012.

Officials in my Department, in consultation with QQI, are currently considering the most appropriate means of addressing this issue.

School Transport Tendering

244. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 999 of 3 November 2015, the reasons for the decisions each year; and the reason her Department or Bus Éireann did not have a European Union tender process for the private operator school transport bus services under the European Union public procurement law from 1 July 1993, when the law was changed here until the school year 2011-2012, given that she indicated that Bus Éireann is obliged to tender in line with the European directive. [8888/16]

245. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 999 of 3 November 2015, if it is appropriate to withhold information from Dáil Éireann that her Department was not compliant with European Union public procurement laws in making direct awards to private bus contractors for school bus services from 1 July 1993 to May 2011. [8889/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 244 and 245 together.

The Deputy will be aware that Bus Éireann, which operates the school transport scheme on behalf of my Department, is responsible for the procurement of contractors to provide transport services under the School Transport Scheme.

Bus Éireann has advised that the current utilities directive which applies to the Company in relation to this matter is Directive 2014/25/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and

postal services sectors and repealing Directive 2004/17/EC.

Bus Éireann has also advised that it has always had a competitive process in place for the award of school transport contracts, albeit not as developed as the process in place since 2011. Prior to 2011, Bus Éireann local school transport offices placed advertisements in local and national newspapers each year. When private bus operators made application they were considered for inclusion on a panel of suitable operators. As work became available service providers on these panels were invited to submit a quotation for those services. In these cases a request for a quotation was sought from a minimum of three suitable operators where possible.

State Properties Data

246. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question Number 790 of 14 April 2016, the length of time each of the sites listed has been vacant. [8893/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The detail requested by the Deputy in relation to vacant State properties and land in my ownership is as follows.

Properties in the Ownership of the Minister for Education & Skills in respect of which there are no immediate plans for development

Location	County	Size (Acres)	Local Authority	Date of PURCHASE
Aghina	Cork	1.57	Cork County Council	2009
Ballincollig	Cork	0.15	Cork County Council	2002
Garryvicleheen, Thurles	Tipperary	4	Tipperary County Council	1995
Rathcoole	Dublin	4	South Dublin County Council	1978
Rathcroghan	Roscommon	1.5	Roscommon County Council	2007
St. John’s Well, Fairhill	Cork	1.07	Cork City Council	1996
Carna	Galway	8.17	Galway County Council	1975+2007
Ashbourne	Meath	22.41	Meath County Council	2013
Colley St.	Wicklow	1.48	Wicklow County Council	2002

Education and Training Boards

247. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she or a Departmental official will meet with the Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board to discuss proposals for the establishment of An Aonad, an Irish language unit at Ballinodde Community College in County Sligo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8902/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): My Department has considered a proposal made by Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (ETB) to provide Irish-medium education at second level through establishing an Aonad in an existing school in County Sligo. My Department has advised that the proposal needs to be re-examined by the ETB to address a number of issues that could assist in facilitating delivery of Irish-medium

um education more successfully and sustainably in the ETB's area of responsibility.

Officials from my Department have recently been in telephone contact with representatives of the school start-up group in County Sligo and have advised them that the appropriate course in this instance is to re-engage with the ETB concerning the re-examination of its proposal on the basis of the advice and clarification already provided by the Department. I understand that a meeting is being arranged with the ETB. My Department will be happy to examine a proposal when submitted.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

248. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) under the summer works scheme, including when she will make a decision on it; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8903/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Deputy will be aware that I announced details of the successful applicants under the Summer Works Scheme (SWS) (2016-2017) on 28th April last, details of which are published on my Department's website, www.education.ie. €30 million of the €80 million announced for the multi-annual Summer Works Scheme (2016-2017) is now being allocated for vital gas works and electrical upgrades in schools. 197 primary and post primary schools were included in the first round of successful applicants.

Under SWS 2016 and 2017, valid applications from schools that were not reached for funding reasons from within the funding made available in 2016 will qualify to be assessed for purposes of the funding available in 2017, subject to the overall availability of funding. If this arises, the terms and conditions of the scheme as outlined in Circular Letter (0055/2015 which may be accessed on my Department's website, will continue to apply when allocating funding to such projects. An application from the school referred to by the Deputy is available to be considered in this context.

Schools Building Projects Applications

249. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for a permanent structure to accommodate a fourth mainstream class teacher; when she will make a decision on it; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8907/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I am pleased to advise the Deputy that my Department has recently conveyed a decision in principle to the school in question for the approval of additional classroom accommodation.

Teachers' Remuneration

250. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views on correspondence concerning inequitable pay scales for teachers (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8928/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): As a consequence of the financial crisis, there was a need to enact a number of measures to reduce public expenditure

so as to stabilise the country's public finances. The previous Government decided to reduce the salaries and allowances payable to all new entrants to public service recruitment grades (including teachers) by 10% with effect from 1 January 2011. This decision also required that such new entrants would start on the first point of the applicable salary scale, which in the case of teachers had the effect of reducing their starting pay by a further 4-5%. Later in 2011, the Government placed a cap on the overall level of qualification allowances that could be earned by teachers.

Subsequently in 2012, following the public service-wide review of allowances, the Government withdrew qualification allowances for new teachers altogether. However, the Government partially compensated for this by deciding that new entrant teachers would henceforth commence on a new salary scale which had a starting point higher than the starting point of the old scale. Overall, the removal of qualification allowances had the effect of further reducing the pay of new entrant teachers by between 5 and 7 percent.

The measures above – which applied to new entrants only and which were in addition to the pay reductions imposed on public servants generally - were implemented at a time of extraordinarily difficult financial and budgetary circumstances for the State. It is estimated that some 6,700 teachers who entered the profession since 2011 have been affected by the measures.

The Haddington Road Agreement re-aligned the pay scale for teachers who entered teaching between 1 January 2011 and 31 January 2012 with that of pre-2011 entrants. An improved pay scale for post-1 February 2012 entrants was also agreed and implemented under the terms of that Agreement. The Lansdowne Road Agreement will begin the process of restoring the reductions to public service pay which were implemented over recent years. The flat-rate increases contained in the Agreement are proportionately more favourable to new entrants to teaching (who are lower on the pay scale) than to longer serving teachers.

Questions Nos. 251 and 252 answered with Question No. 240.

School Staff

253. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to set out the status of an application for an additional teacher by a school (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9002/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts for the 2016/2017 school year is set out in Circular 0007/2016. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the 30 September 2015.

The staffing arrangements at primary level also include an appeals mechanism for schools to submit an appeal under certain criteria to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board.

The school referred to by the Deputy submitted an application for consideration by the Appeals Board at its March meeting. The Appeals Board determined that the appeal did not satisfy all of the published criteria as set out in Circular 0007/2016. The Appeal Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

The Staffing Schedule includes the provision where schools experiencing rapid increases in enrolment can apply for additional permanent mainstream posts on developing grounds. The Department has not received an application for a developing post from the school referred to

by the Deputy.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

254. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she has made a decision following an interim response regarding financial assistance to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9005/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports. SENOs also make recommendations to my Department where assistive technology is required. The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in making recommendations for support, which is set out in my Department’s Circular 0010/2013.

In order to qualify for equipment under the assistive technology scheme, a child must have been diagnosed with a physical or communicative disability and must also have a recommendation in a professional assessment that the equipment is essential in order to allow the child to access the curriculum. It must also be clear that the existing I.T. equipment in the school is insufficient to meet the child’s needs.

I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has not, to date, received an application for assistive technology support for the child referred to in his question.

The parents, or school, of the child concerned should therefore contact the NCSE regarding a potential application for support in the first instance. All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child’s special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

School Transport Data

255. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to outline her views on the concerns raised by a person (details supplied) regarding the cost of school transport. [9006/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Damien English): Safety of children travelling on the school transport service is of paramount importance to my Department and to Bus Éireann. Bus Éireann place special emphasis on safety and, to this end, have a wide range of checking procedures in place to ensure that a safe and reliable service is provided.

The designation of specific school bus pick-up points is an operational matter for Bus Éireann. I should say, however, that parents also have to play their part in ensuring that children are brought to and collected safely from relevant pick-up points along the route of the journey.

It is not possible to offer a reduced rate for children who travel morning/afternoon only as each child is allocated an individual seat to and from school each day for the school year, whether availed of or not.

Schools Building Projects Applications

256. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when she will make a decision on a revised application for capital funding for a school building project (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9009/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy submitted a revised application, for refurbishment works, containing various revised cost plans and refurbishment options that involve significant additional funding to that previously approved, in October 2013.

Having assessed the documentation submitted it was established that further details relevant to the application were required. This information was recently requested from the school and once received the application can be considered further.

School Accommodation

257. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will grant permission for the board of management of a school (details supplied) in County Cork to use part of the school building to provide preschool and after-school care for the children attending the school; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9019/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to confirm that correspondence has been received from the school in question relating to the matter raised by the Deputy. This matter is currently under consideration and my Department will be in contact directly with the school authority concerned in the near future.

Schools Building Projects Applications

258. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to examine and expedite an application for a school extension (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9020/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The project to which the Deputy refers was authorised to proceed to tender in late November 2015. Following clarification on matters raised by the Design Team it is anticipated that the project will proceed to tender shortly.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

259. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if and when she will facilitate funding for a new roof for the physical education hall for a school (details supplied) under the summer works scheme, with particular reference to the health and safety of users of the hall; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9026/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Deputy will be aware that I announced details of the successful applicants under the Summer Works Scheme (SWS) (2016-2017) on 28th April last, details of which are published on my Department’s website, www.education.ie. €30 million of the €80 million announced for the multi-annual Summer Works Scheme (2016-2017) is now being allocated for vital gas works and electrical upgrades in schools. 197 primary and post primary schools were included in the first round of successful applicants.

Under SWS 2016 and 2017, valid applications from schools that were not reached for funding reasons from within the funding made available in 2016 will qualify to be assessed for purposes of the funding available in 2017, subject to the overall availability of funding. If this arises, the terms and conditions of the scheme as outlined in Circular Letter (0055/2015 which may be accessed on my Department's website, will continue to apply when allocating funding to such projects. An application from the school referred to by the Deputy is available to be considered in this context.

Schools Building Projects Applications

260. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to allocate the required funds under additional accommodation to a school (details supplied) for a woodwork and science laboratory; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9062/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): As the Deputy will be aware, a major building project for the school, to which he refers, is included in my Department's 6 Year Capital Programme, that I announced in November last.

My Department is also in receipt of an application from the school in question for devolved funding to meet immediate accommodation requirements. This application is currently under consideration by my Department. However, I can confirm that to assist the appraisal process my Department's Inspectorate visited the school recently. My Department expects to be in further contact with the school concerned as soon as this assessment process has been finalised.

Schools Building Projects Status

261. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeline for the tender being awarded for the building of the new community school for Maynooth, County Kildare; when the contracts will be signed; when building works will commence; the time from commencement of building works to completion of the project; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9078/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The project to which the Deputy refers has been devolved for delivery to the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB).

The project has been tendered by the KWETB and an assessment of the Tender Report is at an advanced stage in the Department. In this regard, the Department recently sought clarifications from KWETB on aspects of the Tender Report and these are awaited. When these have been received and evaluated the Department will be in direct contact with KWETB with regard to the next steps for the project.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

262. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills why students enrolling in private college courses cannot be considered for Student Universal Support Ireland third level assistance. [9081/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Under my Department's student grant scheme, eligible candidates may receive funding provided they are attending an

approved course at an approved institution as defined in the scheme.

The definition of an approved institution is set out in Section 7 of the Student Support Act 2011 and Regulation 3 of the Student Support Regulations 2016.

There are no plans to amend the definition of an approved institution. However, tax relief on tuition fees may be available for students attending courses in institutions which are not approved for the purposes of grant support, such as private colleges. Details in relation to this relief are available from the Revenue Commissioners on www.revenue.ie.

School Accommodation Provision

263. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application made several years ago by a school (details supplied) for a recreation room; when the school will receive a decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9091/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I can confirm that my Department has received an application from the school, referred to by the Deputy, for additional accommodation.

I wish to advise the Deputy that due to the competing demands on my Department’s capital budget imposed by the need to prioritise available funding towards the provision of essential classroom accommodation, it is not possible at this point to provide an indicative timeframe for the provision of funding for the facility sought.

Schools Establishment

264. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she has a long-term development strategy in place for three schools situated close together in an area (details supplied); if there are applications with her Department for developing any part of these schools; if she will provide the enrolment numbers for each school; if these numbers will increase; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9096/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that in February 2015, I announced that seven new primary schools were to be established to meet demographic needs in different areas of the country. While my announcement did not include a new school for the Foxrock area, it did include a new school in the adjoining area of Goatstown/Stillorgan which will open this September. My announcement followed a detailed analysis of demographic data at primary level undertaken by my Department.

I also wish to advise the Deputy that my Department provided capital funding for additional accommodation at the first named school in 2014 and this accommodation is now in place. In the case of the second named school, my Department provided capital funding for additional accommodation in 2012, 2013 and 2015 to cater for increasing enrolments. The school has commenced the planning process to deliver the building project for the accommodation approved in 2015. At September 2015, there were 564 pupils enrolled in the first named school and 647 pupils in the second named school.

The third named school referred to by the Deputy is a private school and my Department does not hold any information on this school.

Education and Training Boards

265. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will meet with representatives from an organisation (details supplied) regarding the decision not to review an application to establish an Aonad; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9097/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): My Department has considered a proposal made by Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (ETB) to provide Irish-medium education at second level through establishing an Aonad in an existing school in County Sligo. My Department has advised that the proposal needs to be re-examined by the ETB to address a number of issues that could assist in facilitating delivery of Irish-medium education more successfully and sustainably in the ETB’s area of responsibility.

Officials from my Department have recently been in telephone contact with representatives of the school start-up group in County Sligo and have advised them that the appropriate course in this instance is to re-engage with the ETB concerning the re-examination of its proposal on the basis of the advice and clarification already provided by the Department. I understand that a meeting is being arranged with the ETB. My Department will be happy to examine a proposal when submitted.

School Staff

266. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the period of time a fully qualified primary teacher may expect to remain on the main panel before being offered a permanent teaching position; if a maximum permissible waiting time exists before a candidate may be considered for such posts; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9099/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The core function of the redeployment 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 redeployment arrangements are published annually in the staffing circular which is placed on the Department website. The redeployment arrangements for the 2016/17 school year are set out in Circular 0007/2016 which is available on the website. Redeployment panels are drawn up on a diocesan basis for Catholic panels, diocesan/united diocesan basis for Church of Ireland panels and on a national basis for other patron bodies.

The detail relating to numbers on individual redeployment panels is placed on the Department website when the panels are published each year. My Department updates the progress of the panels on the website on a regular basis.

Youth Employment Initiative

267. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she has implemented the structures and systems necessary to certify expenditure under the European Union regulations and have them verified by a designated body, to a level acceptable to the European Commission, in order to draw down funding from the youth employment initiative; and if this

has not been done, the reason why. [9101/16]

268. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding she has allocated under the youth employment initiative; and the funding drawn down to date. [9102/16]

269. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding drawn down from the allocation of funding under the European Union youth employment initiative, excluding the back to work enterprise allowance scheme, the JobBridge scheme, the JobsPlus incentive scheme, the Tús - work placement initiative, the Youthreach scheme, the social inclusion scheme, the activation programme and the momentum scheme. [9103/16]

270. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funds she will draw down from the European Union youth employment initiative in 2016. [9104/16]

271. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding provided from the European Union youth employment initiative for the back to work enterprise allowance, JobBridge, the JobsPlus incentive scheme, Tús - work placement initiative, Youthreach, the Social Inclusion and Activation Programme and Momentum, by scheme, in tabular form. [9105/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Damien English):
I propose to take Questions Nos. 267 to 271, inclusive, together.

The EU co-financed Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) aims to tackle youth unemployment and implement the Youth Guarantee by providing job, education and training opportunities to young people aged 15-25 who are not in employment, education or training. YEI funding is reserved for use in those regions, including Ireland, where youth unemployment levels exceeded 25% during the reference year of 2012. The specific YEI funding allocation for Ireland of €68m is matched by equal amounts from our European Social Fund (ESF) allocation and from the Exchequer, giving an overall allocation of €204m.

The YEI is integrated into ESF programming and is being delivered in Ireland as a dedicated priority axis within the ESF Programme for Education, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020. Seven specific actions are being funded under the YEI, namely the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance; JobBridge; JobsPlus Incentive Scheme; Tús; Youthreach; Social Inclusion and Activation Programme; and Momentum. The proposed funding allocations for each of these actions, including YEI funding, is set out in the following table. These actions are underway and are being fully funded up-front by the Exchequer.

In accordance with the ESF Regulations, following the adoption of the PEIL in 2015, initial pre-financing of 3.5%, and annual pre-financing of 2% for 2016, of the EU support for the YEI priority axis, amounting to some €7.5m has been received to date. Separately, additional initial pre-financing of €19.8m, to bring the rate to 30% in 2015 of the YEI allocation, has also been received. This additional funding was provided in line with EU Regulation 799 of 2015 which was introduced in response to budgetary constraints faced by Member States and the urgent need to address youth unemployment. However, in an attempt to ensure that the funding was used for the immediate implementation of the YEI, the Regulation provides that if a Member State does not submit an interim payment application by 23 May 2016 for at least 50% of the additional pre-financing amount, that the Member State must reimburse the Commission the total YEI pre-financing contribution.

In accordance with the Regulations governing the European Structural and Investment Funds (including the ESF and the YEI), the relevant managing and certifying authorities for the

Operational Programme must be designated, based on the opinion of an independent audit body which must be satisfied across a range of criteria that systems are in place to allow the authorities to perform their required functions, prior to the making of any application for an interim payment under the Regulations. The systems designation requirements include the provision of a computerised accounting and information system for EU funds to meet the 2014-2020 functionality requirements. The Regulations require Member States to ensure that all exchanges of information between beneficiaries and the relevant authorities and intermediate bodies can be carried out by means of electronic data exchange systems (known as E-Cohesion). These systems will facilitate interoperability with national and Union frameworks and allow for the beneficiaries to submit information only once.

Ireland is developing a national IT system to meet the 2014-2020 ESIF requirements. A Project Board, chaired by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform as the Department with lead responsibility, is overseeing the delivery of this system. A tender for the development of the system was published in March and the deadline for the receipt of applications was Friday, 29 April. It is expected that the system will “go-live” in December.

The intention is that the ESF authorities will be designated later this year and that a claim for an interim payment under the PEIL will be made in 2017. Accordingly, as Ireland will not comply with the relevant Regulatory requirement of making an interim claim in May 2016, the €19.8m additional pre-financing received and currently held in a Suspense Account, may be reimbursed to the Commission.

However, it should be noted that the reimbursement of this pre-financing will not result in any loss of EU monies to the Exchequer, as the full YEI allocation of €68m to Ireland will still be available for drawdown before year-end 2018, and it is expected that this funding will be fully drawn down. Furthermore, as the activities concerned are fully funded up-front by the Exchequer there is no resulting reduction in the funding available to those activities.

Youth Employment Initiative	Funding (€m)
Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) Scheme	4.648
JobsPlus Incentive Scheme	7.992
Tús	35.347
JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme	57.240
Youthreach	79.876
Momentum	13.333
Social Inclusion and Activation Programme (SICAP)	6.000
TOTAL	204.436

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

272. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of special needs assistants and Montessori schools; her views on correspondence regarding a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9109/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of Special Needs Organisers (SENOS) for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) support to mainstream Primary, Post Primary and Special Schools to assist children with special educational needs who also have additional and significant care needs.

Such support is provided in order to facilitate the attendance of those pupils at school and also to minimise disruption to class or teaching time for the pupils concerned, or for their peers, and with a view to developing their independent living skills.

Circular 0030/2014, which is available on my Department's website *www.education.ie*, sets out my Department's policy in relation to the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme. The Circular explains that SNA support is not provided to pre-school services which operate outside of the primary or special school provision, other than in early intervention classes in recognised primary schools, or special schools, where support is provided for as part of the schools total quantum of SNA support.

The vast majority of supports for childcare, including pre-school education, are provided by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The principal vehicle for the delivery of pre-school education is the free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme which was introduced in January 2010 and provides for early learning in a formal setting to children in the year before they commence primary school.

Questions relating to provision of such services should be addressed my colleague, the Minister for Children & Youth Affairs.

Road Safety

273. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to provide a specific capital fund to assist schools in addressing traffic issues at schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9122/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the issue of road safety measures outside the vested site areas of schools, such as road signage, traffic calming measures, parking etc, is a matter that should be raised in the first instance with the relevant Local Authority. In general, individual school authorities are responsible for ensuring the safety and welfare of children and others in their care.

In that regard it is not my intention to provide a specific capital fund to assist schools in addressing traffic issues at schools.

School Accommodation

274. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to grant additional accommodation for a school (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9124/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy has recently made an application to my Department for capital funding for the provision of school accommodation.

A decision on the application will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as the assessment process has been completed.

Broadband Service Provision

275. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding she can provide to a parent who has a child with severe learning disabilities to subsidise the exorbitant Internet usage charges due to residing in a remote area with very limited Internet services in order to download tailored online educational programmes which are crucial to the progression of the child's education and learning development; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9129/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that there is currently no specific programme funding available to cover internet usage/cost for broadband to individuals (per the terms of Department circular to schools circular 0010/2013).

Under the Schools Broadband Access Programme, my Department provides for the supply of internet connectivity for recognised primary and post primary schools. More broadly, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources has responsibility for the roll out of the National Digital Strategy nationally which includes broadband connectivity as one of its main aims.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports. SENOs also make recommendations to my Department where assistive technology is required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in making recommendations for support, which is set out in my Department's Circular 0010/2013.

In order to qualify for equipment under the assistive technology scheme, a child must have been diagnosed with a physical or communicative disability and must also have a recommendation in a professional assessment that the equipment is essential in order to allow the child to access the curriculum. It must also be clear that the existing IT equipment in the school is insufficient to meet the child's needs.

The parents, or school, of the child concerned may wish to contact the NCSE regarding a potential application for support. All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

276. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for delay in the processing of applications under the summer works scheme 2016-2017; and when she will notify schools in County Kildare if their applications are successful or not. [9137/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Deputy will be aware that I announced details of the successful applicants under the Summer Works Scheme (2016-2017) on 28th April last, details of which are published on my Department's website, www.education.ie. €30 million of the €80 million announced for the multi-annual Summer Works Scheme (2016-2017) is now being allocated for vital gas works and electrical upgrades in schools. 197 primary and post primary schools were included in the first round of successful applicants.

Under SWS 2016 and 2017, valid applications from schools that were not reached for funding reasons from within the funding made available in 2016 will qualify to be assessed for purposes of the funding available in 2017, subject to the overall availability of funding. If this arises, the terms and conditions of the scheme as outlined in Circular Letter (0055/2015) which may be accessed on my Department's website will continue to apply. Schools can access details

of the status of their application on my Department's on-line Esinet Portal.

School Curriculum

277. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are dedicated staff in her Department to evaluate the programmes on prevention and education on drugs and alcohol for young persons. [9138/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is particularly important in regard to educating our young people about substance misuse both at primary at post-primary level. Through the SPHE curriculum the issue is dealt with in a sensitive, spiral and developmental manner.

The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) provides support for schools with all aspects of the implementation of the SPHE curriculum including substance misuse issues. My Department's Inspectorate, including dedicated SPHE inspectors at post-primary level, visit SPHE lessons and provide support and advice to teachers and schools.

In 2013 an interim review of the National Drugs Strategy was held to review progress to date on agreed actions. In September 2013, my Department Inspectorate published a composite report based on the subject inspections of SPHE carried out in post primary schools in 2010/11. My Department in 2014 published a Report of the Working Group on Educational Materials for use in SPHE in Post-Primary Schools and Centres of Education, with particular reference to Substance Use Education in the context of SPHE.

My Department is collaborating through the Health and Wellbeing partnership, with the HSE and the Department of Health, as a means of enriching and enhancing the health and well-being of children and young people in the school setting. Both service strands bring different and complementary knowledge and understandings about the needs of children and young people and strategies to address these.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

278. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when she will make decisions on applications under the summer works scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9157/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Deputy will be aware that I announced details of the successful applicants under the Summer Works Scheme (2016-2017) on 28th April last, which are published on my Department's website, www.education.ie. €30 million of the €80 million announced for the multi-annual Summer Works Scheme (2016-2017) is now being allocated for vital gas works and electrical upgrades in schools. 197 primary and post primary schools were included in the first round of successful applicants.

Under SWS 2016 and 2017, valid applications from schools that were not reached for funding reasons from within the funding made available in 2016 will qualify to be assessed for purposes of the funding available in 2017, subject to the overall availability of funding. If this arises, the terms and conditions of the scheme as outlined in Circular Letter (0055/2015) which may be accessed on my Department's website will continue to apply. Schools can access details of the status of their application on my Department's on-line Esinet Portal.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

279. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when she will make a decision on an application by a school (details supplied) under the summer works scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9158/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Deputy will be aware that I announced details of the successful applicants under the Summer Works Scheme (SWS) (2016-2017) on 28th April last, details of which are published on my Department’s website, *www.education.ie*. €30 million of the €80 million announced for the multi-annual Summer Works Scheme (2016-2017) is now being allocated for vital gas works and electrical upgrades in schools. 197 primary and post primary schools were included in the first round of successful applicants.

Under SWS 2016 and 2017, valid applications from schools that were not reached for funding reasons from within the funding made available in 2016 will qualify to be assessed for purposes of the funding available in 2017, subject to the overall availability of funding. If this arises, the terms and conditions of the scheme as outlined in Circular Letter (0055/2015 which may be accessed on my Department’s website, will continue to apply when allocating funding to such projects. An application from the school referred to by the Deputy is available to be considered in this context.

Education and Training Boards Administration

280. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a course (details supplied) run by the Kerry Education and Training Board; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9175/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): This is an operational matter for Kerry Education and Training Board (KETB). I have asked KETB to contact the Deputy directly to provide the information.

School Accommodation Provision

281. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for a new classroom by a school (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9176/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I can confirm that the school to which the Deputy refers has submitted an application for additional accommodation to my Department.

A decision on the application will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as the assessment process has been completed.

SOLAS Training and Education Programmes

282. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to clarify if SOLAS and Education and Training Boards Ireland have changed the tender process for the provision for contracted training, if these changes will affect the many small businesses which

provide contracted training; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9192/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): This is an operational matter for SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards.

SOLAS have advised that in 2013, through an e-tender notification, it established a panel and managed the pre-qualification process for the provision of contracted training for the Education and Training Boards (ETBs). This panel is due to expire in early 2017.

A new procurement framework for the delivery of the required service will be established by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) and operated by the ETBs for the purpose of delivering contracted training services.

The OGP have posted a notice inviting the sector to provide feedback on the draft proposal for the operation of the framework. All interested parties may submit their views.

I understand that the following approaches were included to ensure that small and medium sized businesses retain the opportunity to be listed on the new framework;

Significant reduction in the turnover requirements regarding the financial capacity for applicants.

Limiting the number of lots for which a larger company can apply.

Limiting the minimum number of businesses that will be listed.

Providing a viable sub-contracting option at tender stage and for specific technical contracts, to ensure that small businesses can avail of additional opportunities if they are not listed on the framework.

Encouraging joint venture options by early notification of upcoming changes.

I understand that while the market will ultimately determine the outcome of a regulated tender process, a maximum of 90 businesses can prequalify. Each of these can nominate 3 sub-contractors at the tendering stage, which means that there could potentially be up to 270 businesses on the listing for contracted training at the end of the process. There will be opportunities for small, medium and large indigenous training businesses within the new framework. It should also be noted that there are currently 250 listed businesses on the current panel of which only a small percentage are actively responding to tender invitation opportunities.

Mountain Access Schemes

283. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if commonage owners who grant permission to walkers to walk through their lands are responsible for the safety of the walkers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8881/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): The obligations and responsibilities of landowners in respect of recreational users who walk through their lands with their permission are set out in the Occupiers Liability Act 1995.

Mountain Access Schemes

284. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if compensation is available to persons (details supplied) in County Kerry who allow hill walkers to use trails on their lands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8906/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): My Department administers a Walks Scheme, which provides modest payments to landowners to maintain sections of walking trails that traverse their lands. It does not affect their property rights and is not a payment for access purposes.

Due to budgetary constraints it has not been possible to expand the existing Walks Scheme in recent years to include additional walks such as the one referred to in the details supplied. However, there continue to be 39 trails covered by my Department's Walks Scheme and in 2015 payments to participants exceeded €1.8m. The number of participants currently on the Scheme stands at approximately 1,900.

Mountain Access Schemes

285. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if all community and voluntary groups which have undertaken work on land and property belonging to a local authority or the State will be indemnified against any possible claims where agreement has been reached within these bodies, given recent claims against the National Parks and Wildlife Service. [8973/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): Under the Walks Scheme, managed by my Department, all landowners and occupiers whose property or land is traversed or adjoins a recreational trail that has been inspected and approved by the National Trails Office, are indemnified by a commercial company.

In relation to the Deputy's specific query, any community or voluntary group which has undertaken work on land or property belonging to a local authority or other State body, should liaise directly with the local authority or State body in question and may be required to have public liability insurance in place.

Social and Affordable Housing

286. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will consider applications from local authorities for social housing new-build programmes of 50 units or more; and if there is a maximum development size he is willing to consider. [9043/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): My Department receives new social housing proposals of all different scales from local authorities, including development proposals above 50 units. The provision of social housing is, in the first instance, a matter for each local authority as the housing authority for its area and they determine the scale of such projects, taking account of the guidance set out in 'Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities', see <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,1979,en.pdf>.

I made announcements for a substantial number of new social housing projects in May

2015, in July 2015 and in January 2016. Between these three announcements, almost €680 million has been allocated for over 3,900 social housing new builds, turnkey developments and acquisitions and they include developments above 50 units. Details of these announcements are available on my Department's website at the following links:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/News/MainBody,41340,en.htm>

<http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/News/MainBody,42225,en.htm>

<http://www.environ.ie/housing/social-housing/ministers-kelly-coffey-announce-further-1000-social-housing-units>.

I am keen that all local authorities advance these projects as soon as possible and I have assured them that funding is available to fully support their efforts in this regard.

Local Authority Housing Provision

287. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 452 of 20 April 2016, when he will decide on an application from Sligo County Council, which he has received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8807/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Funding support from my Department has been made available to all local authorities, including Sligo County Council, to support their continued work to return vacant social housing units to productive use. This funding support was confirmed to Sligo County Council at a recent meeting between the Council and my Department. As stated in my reply to Parliamentary Question 452 of 20 April 2016, I expect further proposals to be made by local authorities in respect of the refurbishment of vacant units over the course of 2016, given that there is always turnover in tenancies across social housing stock and, accordingly, further funding allocations are likely to issue over the course of the year.

Water Services Data

288. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the capital investment in water services and water leakages, by local authority, in each of the past 15 years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8812/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I refer to the reply to Question No. 794 of 14 April 2016. The tabular information provided in that reply which gave total spending in the years by local authority, has been updated to present the data on an annualised basis by local authority.

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2000			
Carlow County Council	400,630	400,630	497,532
Cavan County Council	3,570,747	622,085	3,155,083

Questions - Written Answers

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
Clare County Council	6,102,220	4,302,687	2,150,526
Cork City Council	24,426,654	255,947	0
Cork County Council	11,151,968	3,664,546	3,242,529
Donegal County Council	2,997,090	2,355,143	2,349,922
Dublin City Council	74,688,159	7,835,741	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	1,124,757	1,317,458	105,842
Fingal County Council	9,795,870	0	0
Galway City Council	12,574,614	770,953	0

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2000			
Galway County Council	12,947,808	15,596,055	5,094,119
Kerry County Council	5,646,047	2,520,347	1,736,089
Kildare County Council	16,470,012	3,759,998	917,831
Kilkenny County Council	326,147	383,530	1,209,042
Laois County Council	603,431	708,536	932,314
Leitrim County Council	389,465	387,891	1,974,973
Limerick City Council	29,324,511	3,282,481	0
Limerick County Council	819,526	2,284,073	1,589,434
Longford County Council	1,382,629	0	1,151,129
Louth County Council	22,860,517	221,306	910,345
Mayo County Council	9,161,349	2,809,443	4,109,625
Meath County Council	16,563,285	1,104,022	1,207,512
Monaghan County Council	968,986	7,245,629	1,972,322
North Tipperary County Council	1,208,065	3,390,542	1,249,055
Offaly County Council	797,258	506,863	1,181,771
Roscommon County Council	11,159,955	888,295	1,718,165
Sligo County Council	793,838	9,030,823	1,042,341
South Dublin County Council	579,324	343,494	221,360
South Tipperary County Council	6,025,458	341,282	720,507
Waterford City Council	2,041,139	530,707	0
Waterford County Council	738,753	1,661,112	745,565
Westmeath County Council	3,740,928	3,042,740	1,040,922
Wexford County Council	3,253,475	2,833,605	1,128,212
Wicklow County Council	542,296	62,115	1,070,281
2001			
Carlow County Council	0	0	545,027
Cavan County Council	1,015,964	3,241,971	4,851,065
Clare County Council	3,218,331	2,782,841	2,325,956
Cork City Council	73,830,103	570,717	0
Cork County Council	3,348,237	1,616,489	3,111,636

4 May 2016

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
Donegal County Council	5,523,318	3,126,688	3,626,538
Dublin City Council	96,426,018	557,534	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	1,996,308	486,571	6,577
Fingal County Council	14,978,988	4,809,967	0
Galway City Council	27,777,089	2,333,391	0
Galway County Council	6,671,877	11,865,878	4,191,260
Kerry County Council	2,536,871	1,954,614	1,814,298
Kildare County Council	5,224,283	510,224	2,149,653
Kilkenny County Council	2,070,580	2,033,156	1,099,181
Laois County Council	485,396	75,139	1,075,740
Leitrim County Council	492,154	4,290,124	1,941,151
Limerick City Council	61,337,239	1,322,235	0
Limerick County Council	2,062,599	0	1,458,344
Longford County Council	4,998,390	51,308	338,799

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2001			
Louth County Council	3,164,911	282,224	960,341
Mayo County Council	22,620,178	9,885,129	3,960,497
Meath County Council	9,903,766	1,785,049	1,458,720
Monaghan County Council	98,770	5,138,108	2,876,253
North Tipperary County Council	195,036	1,879,576	2,066,624
Offaly County Council	288,803	2,406,864	1,783,804
Roscommon County Council	668,350	126,312	2,251,411
Sligo County Council	2,369,850	3,207,045	1,462,472
South Dublin County Council	2,406,600	259,278	208,621
South Tipperary County Council	4,646,582	322,053	910,665
Waterford City Council	3,040,940	2,462,200	0
Waterford County Council	964,248	257,439	781,371
Westmeath County Council	729,495	1,156,641	2,586,284
Wexford County Council	7,752,428	5,307,161	1,474,309
Wicklow County Council	3,170,387	632,057	1,107,831
2002			
Carlow County Council	2,134,091	1,411,543	579,176
Cavan County Council	961,594	3,676,365	4,237,495
Clare County Council	3,686,207	4,400,816	2,874,504
Cork City Council	61,727,987	68,714	0
Cork County Council	1,971,020	804,588	3,300,121
Donegal County Council	7,106,307	4,029,484	4,403,368
Dublin City Council	64,494,701	3,527,278	0

Questions - Written Answers

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	3,366,969	625,059	27,700
Fingal County Council	10,496,753	5,617,869	0
Galway City Council	17,197,805	4,677,472	0
Galway County Council	4,509,204	5,194,436	4,732,612
Kerry County Council	7,392,932	826,701	2,651,487
Kildare County Council	5,539,452	2,074,914	1,025,598
Kilkenny County Council	2,405,027	824,774	1,246,218
Laois County Council	985,779	1,147,300	1,542,964
Leitrim County Council	600,922	3,955,437	2,601,118
Limerick City Council	60,252,034	2,053,442	0
Limerick County Council	8,466,085	4,358,181	1,540,319
Longford County Council	1,781,767	228,606	1,334,238
Louth County Council	698,584	698,584	1,131,121
Mayo County Council	37,596,560	9,289,169	4,520,665
Meath County Council	9,460,107	4,000,321	1,890,090
Monaghan County Council	42,439	1,816,776	3,664,322
North Tipperary County Council	1,443,668	959,596	1,866,614
Offaly County Council	3,138,256	2,794,723	1,946,750
Roscommon County Council	942,578	571,885	2,376,457
Sligo County Council	6,530,366	1,699,028	2,209,732
South Dublin County Council	699,811	103,723	117,737

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2002			
South Tipperary County Council	5,477,377	436,930	669,042
Waterford City Council	1,705,592	4,340,948	0
Waterford County Council	1,146,802	449,715	633,658
Westmeath County Council	1,485,433	1,505,468	1,252,309
Wexford County Council	14,797,286	4,004,717	1,863,733
Wicklow County Council	350,887	350,887	345,322
2003			
Carlow County Council	1,984,893	509,920	1,670,751
Cavan County Council	1,983,038	1,548,195	5,681,611
Clare County Council	1,874,331	1,155,802	4,259,073
Cork City Council	41,474,619	2,327,546	0
Cork County Council	6,839,734	725,453	4,836,102
Donegal County Council	5,501,284	2,201,301	3,720,573
Dublin City Council	26,058,389	9,045,639	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	1,125,705	2,423,310	258,320
Fingal County Council	15,986,542	8,176,660	0
Galway City Council	6,185,227	638,423	0

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
Galway County Council	4,556,129	5,049,568	4,985,032
Kerry County Council	4,702,354	1,421,219	2,892,454
Kildare County Council	18,422,067	6,630,347	1,316,445
Kilkenny County Council	732,765	338,191	1,475,795
Laois County Council	3,136,029	315,576	1,925,735
Leitrim County Council	745,002	5,189,774	4,368,245
Limerick City Council	36,528,384	1,186,085	0
Limerick County Council	4,037,805	1,757,974	2,325,784
Longford County Council	61,147	376,324	1,566,486
Louth County Council	6,477,115	1,154,284	1,110,600
Mayo County Council	30,140,418	8,391,478	4,956,989
Meath County Council	15,099,346	710,845	1,723,821
Monaghan County Council	611,677	2,222,398	8,974,784
North Tipperary County Council	3,598,454	1,569,883	2,633,489
Offaly County Council	5,100,719	1,176,232	1,160,595
Roscommon County Council	2,833,425	139,778	1,882,753
Sligo County Council	1,208,438	3,371,425	2,339,316
South Dublin County Council	6,235,776	5,053,969	659,673
South Tipperary County Council	7,241,635	121,104	531,440
Waterford City Council	737,932	713,686	0
Waterford County Council	4,761,811	756,052	1,186,707
Westmeath County Council	1,412,731	10,257,896	1,863,866
Wexford County Council	17,793,413	745,145	1,800,941
Wicklow County Council	10,894	10,894	1,492,800
2004			
Carlow County Council	2,191,706	701,404	2,036,413
Cavan County Council	2,912,917	899,349	17,938,996

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2004			
Clare County Council	1,897,152	2,444,290	4,228,953
Cork City Council	22,208,345	1,087,586	0
Cork County Council	9,607,855	2,220,143	5,403,597
Donegal County Council	5,316,847	3,051,490	2,835,415
Dublin City Council	16,966,122	10,734,782	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	3,167,311	663,387	1,733
Fingal County Council	5,295,738	5,373,045	2,032
Galway City Council	5,980,891	478,637	0
Galway County Council	2,607,319	3,546,150	3,023,599
Kerry County Council	1,494,297	1,755,869	2,394,877
Kildare County Council	8,267,466	5,698,058	899,405

Questions - Written Answers

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
Kilkenny County Council	785,103	376,669	1,461,204
Laois County Council	2,575,086	667,985	1,880,653
Leitrim County Council	1,226,364	3,101,538	4,353,702
Limerick City Council	19,663,328	934,039	0
Limerick County Council	3,391,454	566,399	2,495,215
Longford County Council	253,255	335,085	1,072,129
Louth County Council	13,374,313	1,860,121	896,097
Mayo County Council	18,488,064	10,169,481	7,833,051
Meath County Council	20,572,240	2,320,011	1,938,576
Monaghan County Council	1,335,765	1,890,693	4,354,337
North Tipperary County Council	1,265,536	1,550,536	2,558,335
Offaly County Council	5,742,075	2,908,181	1,778,275
Roscommon County Council	12,187,310	908,408	2,531,320
Sligo County Council	718,050	3,698,180	4,397,713
South Dublin County Council	6,063,121	4,331,228	27,080
South Tipperary County Council	14,610,445	459,697	988,149
Waterford City Council	1,019,953	134,385	0
Waterford County Council	11,330,262	537,260	1,246,062
Westmeath County Council	1,139,025	4,313,309	1,943,481
Wexford County Council	4,288,389	1,793,712	2,229,048
Wicklow County Council	1,686,821	626,050	1,844,187
2005			
Carlow County Council	2,460,560	1,458,481	3,749,169
Cavan County Council	2,507,144	639,736	18,012,587
Clare County Council	4,586,812	3,385,278	7,554,176
Cork City Council	7,667,057	0	0
Cork County Council	3,581,416	1,640,405	6,713,937
Donegal County Council	7,228,979	5,060,675	2,984,611
Dublin City Council	27,359,863	15,156,376	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	3,023,787	584,282	0
Fingal County Council	14,509,451	11,390,529	0
Galway City Council	3,336,328	93,084	0
Galway County Council	3,349,337	5,412,309	14,108,537

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2005			
Kerry County Council	268,862	1,105,996	3,273,586
Kildare County Council	17,359,125	12,538,724	1,711,699
Kilkenny County Council	385,500	479,372	1,560,709

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
Laois County Council	1,122,010	394,247	3,185,037
Leitrim County Council	2,281,824	1,024,213	2,814,907
Limerick City Council	29,286,012	801,127	0
Limerick County Council	3,178,590	949,575	4,553,785
Longford County Council	443,927	335,040	983,678
Louth County Council	3,279,278	120,405	767,353
Mayo County Council	8,199,965	4,840,287	17,894,290
Meath County Council	18,692,669	4,767,864	2,040,174
Monaghan County Council	1,371,142	595,114	3,674,409
North Tipperary County Council	2,674,278	1,120,728	2,311,818
Offaly County Council	5,004,786	2,718,421	1,535,400
Roscommon County Council	2,822,860	192,043	2,416,784
Sligo County Council	588,362	3,161,801	8,281,474
South Dublin County Council	1,151,095	1,136,625	16,575
South Tipperary County Council	4,115,345	441,782	1,106,365
Waterford City Council	3,365,209	28,111	0
Waterford County Council	17,427,716	4,552,560	573,915
Westmeath County Council	1,168,886	1,168,886	1,320,151
Wexford County Council	841,408	686,211	1,961,318
Wicklow County Council	3,880,577	1,579,209	3,127,471
2006			
Carlow County Council	1,898,155	1,102,459	4,148,707
Cavan County Council	2,877,769	1,560,894	12,215,890
Clare County Council	3,766,747	3,076,133	8,044,099
Cork City Council	15,183,305	0	0
Cork County Council	4,291,094	3,264,365	5,701,915
Donegal County Council	13,749,481	3,502,654	4,962,568
Dublin City Council	20,624,930	7,781,636	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	2,972,120	1,024,585	1,038
Fingal County Council	10,672,444	13,872,390	0
Galway City Council	6,357,086	0	0
Galway County Council	8,808,618	19,569,566	15,429,166
Kerry County Council	2,816,371	4,529,510	3,178,081
Kildare County Council	17,045,040	6,734,853	1,863,928
Kilkenny County Council	176,314	543,914	1,656,755
Laois County Council	5,524,510	1,239,801	3,274,043
Leitrim County Council	2,299,117	193,514	3,091,230
Limerick City Council	29,212,288	994,014	0
Limerick County Council	2,754,839	162,168	9,010,722
Longford County Council	449,791	932,626	1,841,267
Louth County Council	7,593,790	881,566	990,759

Questions - Written Answers

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2006			
Mayo County Council	28,018,553	3,540,118	16,196,075
Meath County Council	16,075,241	4,166,311	1,720,790
Monaghan County Council	1,256,448	192,485	3,263,380
North Tipperary County Council	648,936	909,236	7,981,915
Offaly County Council	1,822,097	1,272,080	2,163,773
Roscommon County Council	887,444	507,757	4,842,141
Sligo County Council	2,124,982	1,750,866	5,892,000
South Dublin County Council	963,289	614,555	17,629
South Tipperary County Council	4,466,773	662,792	938,848
Waterford City Council	10,268,028	317,224	0
Waterford County Council	5,539,365	5,102,955	969,632
Westmeath County Council	671,500	1,967,282	1,131,841
Wexford County Council	6,733,640	1,979,649	2,833,041
Wicklow County Council	817,869	1,119,840	5,978,872
2007			
Carlow County Council	3,089,257	514,713	6,617,489
Cavan County Council	1,873,296	4,154,472	10,490,781
Clare County Council	147,527	3,089,720	3,716,266
Cork City Council	1,966,645	0	0
Cork County Council	9,831,534	5,144,300	5,812,458
Donegal County Council	22,420,395	4,935,650	9,119,377
Dublin City Council	41,629,055	12,690,287	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	2,481,362	580,869	0
Fingal County Council	4,774,176	21,641,906	0
Galway City Council	572,489	337,585	0
Galway County Council	5,162,508	10,622,557	18,142,995
Kerry County Council	4,488,606	1,719,566	511,318
Kildare County Council	7,401,466	5,304,101	1,537,354
Kilkenny County Council	186,265	257,611	1,290,136
Laois County Council	19,758,967	1,884,529	3,449,960
Leitrim County Council	5,022,528	928,268	5,638,575
Limerick City Council	31,587,779	4,666,820	0
Limerick County Council	2,005,226	851,352	6,634,028
Longford County Council	83,487	83,487	949,598
Louth County Council	7,002,910	1,427,605	1,322,384
Mayo County Council	12,000,467	2,251,508	20,594,271
Meath County Council	9,124,489	7,465,452	2,842,899
Monaghan County Council	360,141	262,421	2,525,976
North Tipperary County Council	1,042,833	1,475,866	8,706,906
Offaly County Council	1,701,262	841,769	2,686,106
Roscommon County Council	4,945,426	2,576,280	4,890,349

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
Sligo County Council	15,254,648	1,126,532	1,898,000
South Dublin County Council	54,492	54,492	29,118
South Tipperary County Council	961,308	972,461	870,846

Tables continuing.

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2007			
Waterford City Council	18,352,182	1,505,381	0
Waterford County Council	8,932,336	2,698,364	607,095
Westmeath County Council	1,770,769	4,839,841	1,281,371
Wexford County Council	4,325,815	1,434,249	2,119,038
Wicklow County Council	4,238,460	3,120,964	4,994,912
2008			
Carlow County Council	2,009,028	1,022,859	4,284,938
Cavan County Council	3,660,765	4,686,370	5,304,506
Clare County Council	2,518,056	14,753,155	4,110,289
Cork City Council	1,157,679	0	0
Cork County Council	26,898,348	6,436,330	3,725,180
Donegal County Council	4,576,154	5,733,658	6,581,524
Dublin City Council	42,407,406	31,426,986	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	7,465,346	3,977,387	20,218
Fingal County Council	7,283,267	2,686,675	36,026
Galway City Council	487,147	169,968	0
Galway County Council	5,526,257	5,001,959	19,187,712
Kerry County Council	7,913,459	2,328,639	2,418,713
Kildare County Council	2,075,738	824,391	1,171,570
Kilkenny County Council	1,067,064	1,377,012	1,261,124
Laois County Council	10,279,118	1,685,651	2,420,163
Leitrim County Council	3,260,888	3,245,277	3,548,179
Limerick City Council	13,556,139	8,842,261	0
Limerick County Council	4,071,665	116,643	4,578,764
Longford County Council	1,301,954	2,539,651	1,292,710
Louth County Council	2,184,413	828,341	730,222
Mayo County Council	3,803,294	1,016,152	16,751,397
Meath County Council	22,863,158	17,678,266	3,186,617
Monaghan County Council	5,173,827	697,366	3,358,748
North Tipperary County Council	3,775,075	1,522,344	2,829,900
Offaly County Council	889,535	763,322	1,672,008
Roscommon County Council	3,857,990	11,475,138	3,556,474
Sligo County Council	4,602,042	999,840	1,859,938

Questions - Written Answers

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
South Dublin County Council	4,230,532	4,230,532	29,759
South Tipperary County Council	1,850,803	704,710	824,611
Waterford City Council	7,061,811	2,904,207	0
Waterford County Council	2,794,083	870,555	1,011,096
Westmeath County Council	8,514,365	850,065	3,286,783
Wexford County Council	10,143,194	3,547,615	2,290,821
Wicklow County Council	10,571,389	6,015,286	2,990,953
2009			
Carlow County Council	1,698,288	477,537	2,709,682
Cavan County Council	1,239,527	3,007,436	4,560,407
Clare County Council	1,830,669	1,922,053	2,808,559

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2009			
Cork City Council	0	719,648	0
Cork County Council	19,046,334	3,019,682	5,576,196
Donegal County Council	7,346,571	8,926,551	3,745,991
Dublin City Council	31,801,265	28,261,762	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	12,934,354	7,768,609	33,192
Fingal County Council	7,945,283	7,758,113	0
Galway City Council	1,156,799	3,727,871	0
Galway County Council	2,173,085	2,382,978	15,399,002
Kerry County Council	3,597,768	3,059,087	4,413,054
Kildare County Council	13,025,136	2,241,369	1,263,681
Kilkenny County Council	1,247,822	1,333,681	1,207,426
Laois County Council	6,487,260	2,915,942	2,051,858
Leitrim County Council	8,689,939	1,993,405	5,210,153
Limerick City Council	9,055,975	1,430,453	0
Limerick County Council	3,964,576	1,833,713	3,732,289
Longford County Council	1,410,220	6,203,575	937,639
Louth County Council	3,475,588	1,217,878	892,611
Mayo County Council	11,674,039	1,581,020	16,518,397
Meath County Council	25,070,071	16,883,986	2,369,044
Monaghan County Council	8,606,476	3,386,325	2,533,132
North Tipperary County Council	1,824,970	2,336,647	2,666,491
Offaly County Council	2,386,825	1,626,697	2,020,723
Roscommon County Council	4,658,417	4,148,268	9,532,065
Sligo County Council	5,099,832	2,214,713	1,585,255
South Dublin County Council	5,537,399	5,413,909	16,400
South Tipperary County Council	4,477,209	1,563,006	732,132
Waterford City Council	7,809,995	2,953,771	0

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
Waterford County Council	2,225,144	3,870,588	943,061
Westmeath County Council	25,776,658	4,524,404	1,590,759
Wexford County Council	3,022,260	4,415,275	2,179,050
Wicklow County Council	8,806,144	11,686,847	2,165,195
2010			
Carlow County Council	3,677,218	4,099,618	2,382,398
Cavan County Council	1,041,834	856,705	2,772,089
Clare County Council	3,787,429	3,785,834	4,557,076
Cork City Council	3,473,288	0	0
Cork County Council	24,109,634	7,564,795	4,581,171
Donegal County Council	13,309,361	5,853,098	3,606,286
Dublin City Council	50,087,967	23,824,408	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	37,275,823	2,751,731	5,221
Fingal County Council	31,564,421	4,071,502	0
Galway City Council	3,936,771	1,572,132	0
Galway County Council	7,913,089	13,362,644	13,531,294
Kerry County Council	7,095,028	1,715,893	3,724,863

Tables continuing.

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2010			
Kildare County Council	7,977,189	3,184,006	886,987
Kilkenny County Council	1,455,319	4,278,105	1,219,090
Laois County Council	4,966,842	1,392,372	1,274,618
Leitrim County Council	9,538,768	1,025,371	4,186,561
Limerick City Council	9,737,910	6,300	0
Limerick County Council	201,397	1,100,382	2,841,854
Longford County Council	2,535,721	5,204,933	717,901
Louth County Council	1,933,847	1,436,505	984,019
Mayo County Council	6,694,467	857,614	12,967,809
Meath County Council	7,099,794	4,895,171	1,293,665
Monaghan County Council	3,562,324	1,007,913	2,110,841
North Tipperary County Council	2,872,484	1,863,818	2,211,882
Offaly County Council	7,395,492	1,110,397	1,649,612
Roscommon County Council	4,367,701	2,089,372	11,154,830
Sligo County Council	1,518,133	885,346	816,108
South Dublin County Council	3,486,351	3,486,351	4,616
South Tipperary County Council	5,436,386	2,216,595	667,364
Waterford City Council	2,591,735	82,162	0
Waterford County Council	3,852,006	700,455	1,143,692
Westmeath County Council	4,375,846	3,071,785	1,115,863

Questions - Written Answers

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
Wexford County Council	3,095,190	7,372,843	2,078,670
Wicklow County Council	1,777,597	5,424,019	3,002,354
2011			
Carlow County Council	4,096,343	7,560,209	1,460,961
Cavan County Council	2,008,660	1,164,080	2,199,574
Clare County Council	881,202	911,954	3,259,365
Cork City Council	6,325,576	438,157	0
Cork County Council	14,024,810	10,527,973	4,508,669
Donegal County Council	28,704,084	2,765,658	3,136,397
Dublin City Council	27,793,544	24,757,503	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	10,203,148	520,712	4,500
Fingal County Council	22,819,921	9,796,330	0
Galway City Council	2,201,297	763,433	0
Galway County Council	2,354,328	17,182,272	19,065,735
Kerry County Council	4,766,066	3,104,197	2,662,102
Kildare County Council	16,851,116	4,199,212	1,060,213
Kilkenny County Council	808,125	1,319,112	1,054,613
Laois County Council	4,118,479	580,913	1,728,608
Leitrim County Council	255,252	1,820,641	3,317,224
Limerick City Council	4,540,479	1,034,278	0
Limerick County Council	2,697,171	234,355	3,228,567
Longford County Council	1,370,574	4,174,930	1,254,336
Louth County Council	2,076,062	428,390	1,060,950
Mayo County Council	1,873,884	2,216,946	11,267,319

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2011			
Meath County Council	6,048,978	1,052,634	1,233,712
Monaghan County Council	3,176,681	1,497,337	1,920,559
North Tipperary County Council	2,376,603	2,100,695	2,155,704
Offaly County Council	13,502,254	2,183,522	1,681,569
Roscommon County Council	4,162,007	1,107,000	2,394,025
Sligo County Council	2,206,963	843,545	1,664,480
South Dublin County Council	6,553,420	5,528,462	2,032
South Tipperary County Council	1,586,122	1,290,593	690,928
Waterford City Council	6,284,310	1,164,793	0
Waterford County Council	1,659,266	948,799	1,282,039
Westmeath County Council	2,349,707	2,939,428	1,333,162
Wexford County Council	5,478,803	5,340,132	2,309,874
Wicklow County Council	3,988,163	8,070,586	1,544,812

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2012			
Carlow County Council	3,162,177	4,525,410	864,209
Cavan County Council	1,216,069	1,731,203	1,332,571
Clare County Council	1,169,367	1,576,297	883,341
Cork City Council	5,498,821	498,821	0
Cork County Council	19,094,592	5,587,916	1,832,490
Donegal County Council	9,719,362	963,998	1,606,316
Dublin City Council	16,140,972	18,506,465	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	5,499,752	346,000	21,166
Fingal County Council	7,753,128	18,285,621	0
Galway City Council	1,939,148	908,717	0
Galway County Council	2,376,804	1,706,961	4,607,080
Kerry County Council	3,907,906	3,244,021	4,948,056
Kildare County Council	16,339,132	15,839,216	415,983
Kilkenny County Council	1,439,620	1,688,384	1,164,459
Laois County Council	2,553,952	537,170	1,016,637
Leitrim County Council	1,057,956	949,628	2,036,732
Limerick City Council	5,391,711	1,368,118	0
Limerick County Council	3,714,110	745,053	1,298,614
Longford County Council	1,633,513	4,402,891	951,129
Louth County Council	283,931	81,274	785,568
Mayo County Council	639,565	5,091,622	4,928,994
Meath County Council	5,290,721	2,261,042	847,867
Monaghan County Council	32,722	104,023	304,390
North Tipperary County Council	1,823,863	6,507,553	1,145,492
Offaly County Council	3,680,258	844,764	741,917
Roscommon County Council	2,911,326	1,538,507	1,104,591
Sligo County Council	1,174,883	663,990	883,921
South Dublin County Council	3,881,747	3,149,490	20,483
South Tipperary County Council	3,125,734	1,704,313	486,364
Waterford City Council	4,070,468	196,966	0

Tables continuing.

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2012			
Waterford County Council	5,877,877	1,363,578	1,116,266
Westmeath County Council	690,603	1,792,047	979,439
Wexford County Council	4,962,261	5,356,392	1,796,040
Wicklow County Council	2,308,866	1,909,317	1,135,562

Questions - Written Answers

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2013			
Carlow County Council	633,548	338,829	1,254,088
Cavan County Council	2,242,429	2,660,004	1,619,044
Clare County Council	880,799	2,083,889	594,890
Cork City Council	5,734,712	970,401	0
Cork County Council	14,195,378	7,090,937	910,965
Donegal County Council	4,494,558	3,386,936	1,525,855
Dublin City Council	11,737,652	15,262,802	0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council	310,764	413,169	3,959
Fingal County Council	14,172,317	10,374,044	0
Galway City Council	1,814,806	1,508,301	0
Galway County Council	5,686,953	7,901,567	3,843,658
Kerry County Council	4,124,298	5,758,342	3,430,161
Kildare County Council	6,568,944	13,863,643	578,039
Kilkenny County Council	1,749,425	468,824	1,241,826
Laois County Council	5,464,709	625,754	1,769,878
Leitrim County Council	921,897	2,335,286	1,202,555
Limerick City Council	3,490,975	1,690,963	0
Limerick County Council	6,489,112	1,289,993	1,075,873
Longford County Council	5,607,080	535,538	1,028,919
Louth County Council	996,767	457,720	1,242,784
Mayo County Council	1,503,192	5,398,191	2,094,400
Meath County Council	4,411,209	439,756	662,346
Monaghan County Council	1,445,135	1,369,946	711,040
North Tipperary County Council	1,957,807	6,098,110	820,456
Offaly County Council	2,193,600	1,593,130	926,393
Roscommon County Council	551,820	675,104	931,046
Sligo County Council	372,716	170,937	864,690
South Dublin County Council	1,213,335	1,213,335	10,775
South Tipperary County Council	2,285,448	2,720,009	545,332
Waterford City Council	946,089	261,923	0
Waterford County Council	3,091,801	2,091,542	1,235,835
Westmeath County Council	1,979,320	1,979,320	954,235
Wexford County Council	3,382,751	2,046,667	1,608,190
Wicklow County Council	1,744,940	3,415,547	934,271
2014			
Carlow County Council			658,596
Cavan County Council			718,013
Clare County Council			179,300
Cork City Council			0

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2014			
Cork County Council			769,317
Donegal County Council			151,938
Dublin City Council			0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council			4,722
Fingal County Council			0
Galway City Council			0
Galway County Council			1,435,106
Kerry County Council			621,156
Kildare County Council			124,846
Kilkenny County Council			559,915
Laois County Council			594,947
Leitrim County Council			546,363
Limerick City Council			0
Limerick County Council			1,140,212
Longford County Council			201,137
Louth County Council			419,969
Mayo County Council			1,898,639
Meath County Council			289,023
Monaghan County Council			659,844
North Tipperary County Council			651,891
Offaly County Council			501,350
Roscommon County Council			1,683,661
Sligo County Council			665,088
South Dublin County Council			14,604
South Tipperary County Council			136,159
Waterford City Council			0
Waterford County Council			218,636
Westmeath County Council			260,267
Wexford County Council			385,032
Wicklow County Council			409,357
2015			
Carlow County Council			285,307
Cavan County Council			1,415,848
Clare County Council			439,024
Cork City Council			0
Cork County Council			1,259,657
Donegal County Council			136,809
Dublin City Council			0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council			9,566
Fingal County Council			2,951
Galway City Council			0

Questions - Written Answers

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
Galway County Council			2,591,931
Kerry County Council			334,051
Kildare County Council			271,152

Tables continuing.

	Water Services Investment Programme*	Water Services Investment Programme*	Rural Water Programme
Local Authority	Wastewater €	Water €	€
2015			
Kilkenny County Council			691,329
Laois County Council			522,274
Leitrim County Council			180,759
Limerick City Council			0
Limerick County Council			885,824
Longford County Council			78,803
Louth County Council			342,719
Mayo County Council			1,908,133
Meath County Council			433,155
Monaghan County Council			798,642
North Tipperary County Council			0
Offaly County Council			449,646
Roscommon County Council			844,298
Sligo County Council			362,845
South Dublin County Council			8,013
South Tipperary County Council			642,052**
Waterford City Council			0
Waterford County Council			439,606
Westmeath County Council			114,778
Wexford County Council			954,982
Wicklow County Council			273,171

* The WSIP included some funding for projects and infrastructure on activities not transferred to Irish Water such as river basin management plans and other water quality and environmental related costs.

** This amount includes figure for all Tipperary following the amalgamation of North & South Tipperary.

Local Authority Housing Provision

289. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to make funding available for County Kerry for the renovation of long-term void properties in order to increase the availability of social housing units; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8842/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Funding support from my Department has been made available to all local authorities, including Kerry County Council, to support their continued work under the programme to return vacant social housing units to productive use. This funding support was confirmed to Kerry County Council at a recent meeting with my Department.

Alongside that funding programme, my Department has also recently implemented an additional programme to support local authorities in remediating social houses where the costs are greater than those ordinarily associated with vacant houses and allocations to Kerry County Council in respect of their proposals under this programme will be made shortly.

Local Authority Services

290. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the discussions he is progressing with Irish Water and the local authorities with a view to the taking in charge of malfunctioning sewerage plants serving estates that are otherwise ready to be taken in charge. [8859/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I refer to the reply to Question No. 459 of 20 April 2016.

My Department issued Circular letter FPS3/2016 on 22 April 2016 advising each local authority of the indicative level of funding proposed to be made available to them through the new National Taking In Charge Initiative (NTICI). The €10m being made available in 2016 is distributed across the following three measures:

- Measure 1 (€5.5m) for housing estates not containing developer provided water services infrastructure;

- Measure 2 (€3.5m) for housing estates served by developer provided water services infrastructure; and

- Measure 3 (€1m) for technical assistance to advance knowledge for the delivery of the taking in charge process.

The deadline for receipt of applications from local authorities for funding is 13 May 2016. My Department is currently finalising oversight arrangements to ensure the efficient operation of the NTICI, which will involve representatives of my Department, Irish Water, the Environmental Protection Agency and local authorities.

The NTICI will also build upon an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place between local authorities and Irish Water which covers the taking in charge process and capital investment provisioning by Irish Water to support its role within the overall process.

It is intended that the experience and learning from the operation of the NTICI over the course of 2016 will point the way forward in relation to how to progress the taking in charge of estates from which applications are currently in hand.

Rent Controls

291. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on correspondence concerning homelessness and a person (details

supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8936/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015, enacted on 4 December 2015, introduced a number of measures to address rent stability and housing supply. In relation to rent stability, the Act provides, inter alia, that the minimum period between rent reviews for tenancies is being increased from 12 to 24 months and this new provision will apply for a 4 year period. In addition, the minimum period of notice of new rent is increased from 28 days to 90 days and longer notice periods for the termination of long-term tenancies have been introduced. Each of these new provisions commenced on enactment.

Further provisions to support rent stability in the 2015 Act include:

- that notice of new rent sent must be in a prescribed form, include details of dispute resolution procedures available through the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) and be accompanied by details of rent in respect of 3 comparable dwellings in the area;

- that notification of a rent increase to the RTB will include, among other things, a signed statement by the tenant that they are aware of their rights in relation to rent and rent reviews.

With regard to the termination of a tenancy, the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015 introduced strengthened protections applying to tenancy terminations in order to safeguard against terminations on false grounds. These measures involve, inter alia, a landlord having to make a statutory declaration as to their intention to sell a property. These provisions will be commenced on 9 May 2016.

Ultimately, a lack of supply and competition in the residential sector is putting upward pressure on rents and the key to addressing rising rents in the medium to long term is through increasing the supply of all forms of housing. The Government is addressing this on a number of fronts, including through Construction 2020; A Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector and the Social Housing Strategy 2020.

In that regard, a number of important measures have been taken aimed at improving housing delivery viability and increasing supply, including the introduction of a vacant site levy; reductions in development contributions and a targeted development contribution rebate scheme in Dublin and Cork to encourage large scale developments at affordable prices; revised Part V provisions and legislative amendments to introduce greater flexibility and streamlining to the Strategic Development Zone provisions of the Planning and Development Acts. The actions taken under Construction 2020 are complemented by the ongoing implementation of the Social Housing Strategy and the plans by NAMA to fund the delivery of 20,000 residential units by 2020.

Laying the Foundations: Housing Actions Report, which was published on 14 April 2016, provides further information on thirty-one major actions taken across the housing spectrum since mid-2014 to increase the supply of housing. The report is available on my Department's website at - <http://www.environ.ie/housing/activity/laying-foundations-housing-action-report>.

In recognition of the difficulty faced by households in accessing the housing market, an affordable rental pilot scheme was announced as part of Budget 2016, with €10 million being made available to fund a pilot in 2016. The details of the Scheme are currently being developed by my Department with a view to roll-out later this year.

The Scheme will involve an ongoing annual commitment to secure a long term increase in the supply of affordable properties to meet the needs of those households that would struggle to make rental payments under present market conditions. The pilot Scheme is expected to work

on the basis of tenants paying the majority of the rental cost from their own resources, with the State helping to meet the shortfall. It is intended that the scheme would be made available to employed households on low to moderate incomes, as well as being a possible support option for some households who qualify for social housing support. A State policy intervention - such as a subsidy - would be applied to bridge the gap between what people can afford, and what the housing market charges. Such a scheme would also be expected to facilitate and incentivise private investment into this sector.

I am satisfied that an extensive range of housing measures have been undertaken within my powers as Minister and having regard to legal and financial constraints. These measures are outlined in the aforementioned Housing Actions Report. The residential construction sector in Ireland has undergone a very significant shock in recent years and housing output must be kept under review and further action taken as appropriate to ensure that supply returns to the levels required.

Fire Stations Provision

292. **Deputy Seán Canney** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the timeframe for tendering for a new fire station in Tuam, County Galway; when construction will commence and when the fire station will be operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8948/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The provision of fire services in local authority areas, including the establishment and maintenance of fire brigades, the assessment of fire cover needs and the provision of premises, is a statutory function of the individual fire authorities under the provisions of the Fire Services Act 1981. My Department supports the fire authorities through setting general policy, providing a central training programme, issuing guidance on operational and other related matters and providing capital funding for priority infrastructural projects.

In February 2016, I announced a five-year Fire Services Capital Programme with an allocation of €40 million, based on the current annual €8 million allocation, to be used for the purchase of fire appliances and specialist equipment, building or upgrading of prioritised Fire Stations, an upgrade of the Communications and Mobilisation system and improvements to Training Centres.

A fire station project in Tuam is included in this programme under the list of priority projects to be progressed in 2016. In this regard my Department is currently liaising with the relevant local authority so that this project can be progressed. In March 2016, a capital appraisal and detailed cost plan were requested in respect of the project and once these have been completed it will be possible to outline the timeframe for delivery of this project.

Building Regulations Compliance

293. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the person or body responsible for the enforcement of the regulation of domestic plumbing; his views on comments by persons (details supplied); and if he will resolve the regulation enforcement gap in this area. [8958/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): On 7 October 2015, my Department appeared before the

Joint Committee on Public Service Oversight and Petitions in connection with its examination of central heating systems and the regulation of domestic plumbing. The existing and proposed arrangements relevant to the regulation of domestic plumbing were summarised for the Committee and are set out in the official report for the date in question and this remains the up-to-date position on this matter. As indicated to the Joint Committee, the National Standards Authority of Ireland is currently developing a Code of Practice which will provide best practice guidance for use by the trade, by drawing together the references to relevant standards with useful explanations in an easily readable form. I understand the Code of Practice will be ready for public consultation later this year. When the Code of Practice is finalised my Department will be in a position to consider whether and in what circumstances it might be appropriately referenced in regulations or statutory guidance published by my Department.

Local Authority Rates

294. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the revenue generated by the collection of commercial rates, as determined by the national Valuation Office, in each of the local authorities, in tabular form. [8960/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority. The annual rate on valuation (ARV), which is applied to the valuation for each property determined by the Valuation Office, to obtain the amount payable in rates, is decided by the elected members of each local authority during the annual budget process.

The latest available audited local authority financial statements relate to 2014. The following table includes details of commercial rates collected, as reported by local authorities in Appendix 7 of their individual audited financial statements. It should be noted that the amounts collected may include arrears. As a matter of course, every local authority publishes its annual audited financial statement on its website.

As with all local charges, the invoicing and collection of due amounts is a matter for the local authority concerned to manage in light of prevailing circumstances and in accordance with normal accountancy procedures.

-	Rates Collected (€)
Authority Name	2014
Carlow	10,706,965
Cavan	11,129,638
Clare	40,869,135
Cork City	58,927,699
Cork County	110,296,011
Donegal	22,608,627
Dublin City	319,929,702
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	76,771,437
Fingal	114,887,009
Galway City	30,360,509
Galway County	20,819,354
Kerry	32,691,594

-	Rates Collected (€)
Kildare	44,456,026
Kilkenny	15,850,415
Laois	9,040,193
Leitrim	4,043,707
Limerick City & County	46,128,313
Longford	6,074,093
Louth	23,414,231
Mayo	19,456,051
Meath	28,395,082
Monaghan	9,773,257
Offaly	11,161,165
Roscommon	8,814,379
Sligo	9,906,663
South Dublin	121,855,403
Tipperary	24,728,932
Waterford City & County	27,670,587
Westmeath	11,685,988
Wexford	26,849,026
Wicklow	25,885,238

Housing Adaptation Grant Funding

295. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will reintroduce the housing repair for the elderly scheme in local authorities to enable a 50:50 scheme whereby elderly persons in need of urgent works to their homes can, through a combination of contribution and skill set, prolong their stay in their own homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8968/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The current scheme of Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability was introduced in 2007 and has encompassed the schemes for Essential Repairs Grants, Disabled Persons Grants, and the Special Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme. The current Housing Adaptation Grants provide a strong level of funding to support older people for the continued independent occupancy of their own homes. For 2016, there is a total funding availability of €56.25 million, which is an increase of some 10% over the previous year and will see over 8,000 homes receiving grant aid this year.

Leader Programmes

296. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason for the undue delay in the commencement of the roll-out of the much publicised Leader programme; if he will introduce a definitive start date for the programme in order that the many voluntary and community groups and individuals can expedite their plans and put works programmes in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8969/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): There is no undue delay in the roll-out of the new LEADER programme. My Department is currently engaged in a robust selection process that is being carried out in accordance with EU regulations. These regulations prescribe a mandatory minimum timeframe for the development of LEADER local development strategies by local action groups, as well as their evaluation and selection by an Independent Selection Committee established for that purpose. I am satisfied that the process is progressing in a timely manner, while also focusing on securing high quality LEADER strategies that will yield the optimum results for rural Ireland.

At this stage, 32 strategies have been received from the 28 designated LEADER areas, of which 26 have been evaluated and 21 have reached the standard necessary to allow discussions on contracts and implementation arrangements to proceed. The remaining six strategies will be evaluated by the Selection Committee later this month. In the meantime, my Department will continue to work with the five local action groups whose strategies have not reached the required standard to date.

I expect contracts to be signed with the first tranche of local action groups very shortly as discussions in relation to contracts and implementation arrangements are concluded. Discussions will continue with the remaining groups in the coming weeks as their strategies are approved. In this regard, I anticipate a phased commencement of the programme across all areas between May and July.

Waste Management

297. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the rules and parameters for the spreading of sewage waste from local authority treatment plants and from septic tanks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8974/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The spreading of sewage sludge from both local authority treatment plants and septic tank systems must be carried out in accordance with relevant environmental and other applicable legislation, including the provisions of the Waste Management (Use of Sewage Sludge in Agriculture) Regulations 1998, as amended, and the European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2014.

In brief, those seeking to spread sewage sludge are required under legislation to:

- seek written acceptance for the suitability of spreadlands by submitting a Nutrient Management Plan to the Local Authority in whose area the sludge is to be recovered;
- satisfy themselves as to whether a Waste Licence, Permit or Certificate of Registration is also required for their proposed spreading activity and apply to the relevant authority where necessary;
- apply to the Local Authority in whose area the sludge is to be stored, as required under the Waste Management (Registration of Sewage Sludge Facility) Regulations 2010;
- supply the information required for the Sludge Register to the Local Authority, in a format and frequency required by the Local Authority;
- ensure that vehicles transporting waste hold a Waste Collection Permit as required under

the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations 2007, as amended; and

- investigate whether the activity of spreading, or the storage of sewage sludge requires planning permission.

In addition, Local Authorities require that the spreading of sewage sludge is subject to compliance with relevant codes of practice, e.g. Code of Good Practice for the Use of Biosolids in Agriculture.

Housing Adaptation Grant Data

298. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of applications, the waiting times, the number of recipients and the number of refusals under the housing aid for older people, housing adaptation grants scheme and mobility aids grant scheme from each scheme's inception by scheme, by local authority and by year in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8975/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Information on the funding provided and grants paid to each local authority by my Department under the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability, since the grants were introduced, is available at the following link: <http://www.environ.ie/housing/statistics/social-and-affordable/other-local-authority-housing-scheme-statistics>.

The detailed administration of the grants, including the assessment, approval and prioritisation of grants to applicants under the various grants measures, is the responsibility of the relevant local authority and my Department does not hold information in relation to waiting times and refusals.

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

299. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will award financial assistance to make a family-owned home habitable and therefore remove persons from a council housing list, in the context of a person who is on a list and is availing of rent supplement but who has access to a family home in great need of refurbishment. [8983/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): My Department provides grant assistance to Local Authorities under a scheme known as the Improvement Works in Lieu (of Local Authority Housing) Scheme. This enables the authorities to repair, improve or extend privately-owned houses occupied or intended to be occupied by an approved housing applicant, as an alternative to the provision of local authority housing.

The administration of the scheme, including the assessment of applications, is a matter for each local authority.

Waste Management

300. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the allowance exemption he is giving to households with medical needs such as adult nappies and so on in respect of the upcoming pay by weight refuse charges; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [8994/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): My Department has met with groups who represent persons with special needs and has also been in contact with the HSE and the waste management industry to discuss the issue and to try to find a workable and fair solution to this important matter.

Notwithstanding the complexity of the issues involved, I am satisfied that a number of possible solutions are being explored as a matter of urgency.

Housing Estates

301. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if all sections of the Planning and Development Act 2000 have been brought into force, particularly the sections dealing with the taking in charge of estates by local authorities including section 180; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9011/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): All provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 came into operation over the period 1 November 2000 to 28 April 2004, inclusive. Section 180 of the 2000 Act relating to the taking in charge of estates by planning authorities came into operation on 21 January 2002 by way of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (Commencement) (No. 3) Order 2001 which was signed by the then Minister on 19 December 2001.

Tenant Purchase Scheme

302. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government if he has considered making provisions to ensure that former council houses that are bought out by tenants could only be re-purchased by the council again, if they are resold rather than going on sale in the open market which could result in sales to investors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9027/16]

310. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the tenant purchase scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9044/16]

311. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government the status of local authority tenants who are affected by radon (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9046/16]

313. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government why local authority houses which have adaptations in place to accommodate disabilities cannot be purchased through the tenant purchase scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9071/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 302, 310, 311 and 313 together.

Provision was made in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 for a new incremental tenant purchase scheme for existing local authority houses. Following the necessary preparatory work the new Scheme came into operation on 1 January 2016. The Scheme is open

to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible tenants must meet certain conditions including having been in receipt of social housing support for a minimum period of one year and having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum.

The minimum reckonable income is determined by the relevant housing authority in accordance with the detailed provisions of the Ministerial Direction issued under Sections 24(3) and (4) of the 2014 Act.

Under the terms of the new Scheme the discounts are linked to tenant income and can be 40%, 50% or 60% of the purchase price. On sale of a house under the Scheme, the housing authority will place an incremental purchase charge on the house equivalent to the discount granted to the tenant. Generally, the charge withers away over a period of 20, 25 or 30 years depending on the level of discount received.

Where a tenant purchaser wishes to re-sell the house during the charge period he or she must seek the consent of the housing authority to the resale. In such cases, the housing authority also has the first option to buy back the house. If the tenant purchaser sells the house in the charge period, he or she must pay to the housing authority the current value of the outstanding charge.

The Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) Regulations 2015 governing the Scheme provides for a number of specified classes of houses to be excluded from sale. The Regulations do not exclude houses which have been specifically adapted for the needs of people with disabilities or houses which are affected by radon.

Housing authorities may, within the provisions of the Regulations, exclude certain houses which, in the opinion of the authority, should not be sold for reasons such as proper estate management. It is a matter for each housing authority to administer the new Scheme in its operational area in line with the over-arching provisions of the relevant governing legislation.

The new scheme is in the very early stages of implementation and my Department is monitoring its operation in consultation with housing authorities.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

303. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the stages of the procurement process he and local authorities used for the provision of local authority housing from pre-planning through to construction; and the average length of time this process takes for any individual build project, based on all local authority new build housing projects that have been completed during 2014 and 2015. [9035/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Procurement in relation to social housing build developments, from pre-planning through to construction, arises primarily in relation to procurement of consultants and procurement of contractors. These follow either national or EU procurement requirements, depending on the cost involved, as required by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Carrying out procurement as part of a social housing build development is the responsibility of the local authority or approved housing body implementing the project and does not directly involve my Department. Accordingly, my Department does not retain records on the average length of time of procurement processes carried out by local authorities or approved housing bodies. I would point out that as major public sector bodies, local authorities deal with procurement on an ongoing basis and have a strong level of experience and expertise in the area.

Homeless Accommodation Provision

304. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government the fast-track planning and procurement process used in the rapid build projects in Poppintree in Ballymun in Dublin 11. [9036/16]

305. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government if the fast-track procurement process used for the Ballymun rapid build project could be used for standard local authority social housing new builds, where Part 8 planning permission is already in place; and if not, the reason. [9037/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 304 and 305 together.

My Department's role in relation to homelessness involves the provision of a national framework of policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of housing authorities in addressing homelessness at local level. Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of accommodation for homeless persons rests with individual housing authorities. I understand that Dublin City Council, as contracting authority for the rapid-delivery housing units intended to accommodate homeless families at Poppintree, Ballymun, availed of the accelerated restricted procedures under the relevant EU procurement directives for procurement of the units and that the Chief Executive availed of his powers under section 179(6)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 for planning purposes.

The Office of Government Procurement is currently developing a Rapid Delivery Housing Procurement Framework, with a view to it being available by end-Summer. This will be available to the housing authorities in the Dublin region for the procurement of the 350 rapid delivery units identified for the region over and above the 150 units being delivered by Dublin City Council and, indeed, will be available to all local authorities nationally, should they wish to procure rapid delivery housing for pressing accommodation needs.

In late 2015, I issued a Ministerial Policy Directive, under section 29 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, to the four Dublin planning authorities. The purpose of the Directive was to remind the authorities of the statutory provisions of section 179 of the Planning and Development Act and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2011, as amended, in relation to local authority own development and recommend that they utilise all powers available to them under these provisions for the purpose of finding solutions to the social housing situation and accelerating the delivery of social housing developments to address the pressing social housing need.

Housing Assistance Payments

306. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of housing assistance payment tenancies in place as of 1 April 2016, by new tenancies, and by existing tenancies, where the State subsidy has changed from rent supplement to housing assistance payment. [9038/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme continues to be rolled out across the country on a phased basis and is now operational in 19 local authority areas. A detailed breakdown of the Quarter 1 2016 data is currently being prepared, including the number of households transferring from the Rent Supplement scheme in this period. This detailed breakdown will be

published on my Department's website, www.environ.ie, shortly.

NAMA Property Sales

307. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of the 2,000 properties transferred to social housing from the National Asset Management Agency or from National Asset Management Agency debtors that have been tenanted, as of 1 April 2016. [9039/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Since December 2011, my Department together with the Housing Agency, local authorities, and approved housing bodies have been working with the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) in order to facilitate the provision of residential properties for social housing use. The properties under consideration are part of the security for loans that NAMA has acquired. In the majority of cases, properties remain in the ownership of the original borrowers. The remaining properties are controlled by receivers appointed by NAMA. To the end of March 2016, 2,042 of these units have been secured for social housing providers. This figure includes 1,469 units that are complete and a further 573 units where contracts have been signed and final completion works are under way in order to bring the units to a habitable standard. A further 163 properties are considered as being active transactions whereby terms are agreed or active negotiation is on-going by all parties concerned or where a detailed appraisal is being carried out. An additional 335 properties are to be further appraised.

While the allocation of properties to social housing tenants is a matter for each individual local authority, from the information available to my Department, I am confident that the majority of the 1,469 units that are complete are currently occupied. In some cases delays may occur because additional works or adaptations may be required to units, for example in cases where the units are to be tenanted by someone with a physical disability.

Information on the NAMA social housing programme is available on the website of the Housing Agency at www.housing.ie/NAMA.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

308. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government the progress of the targets for 2015 to 2018 announced on 1 April 2015 (details supplied), and the number of units delivered, that is tenanted on 1 April 2016, by local authority, in tabular form. [9040/16]

309. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government the details of the 13,000 keys handed over under the social housing strategy in 2015 and in 2016 to date, by tenancy type, including local authority new build, refurbishment, acquisition and re-let; new Part V allocation; approved housing body new build and relet; new and renewed tenancy under the rental accommodation scheme; new tenancy under the housing assistance payment scheme, old tenancy transferred from the rent supplement scheme to the housing assistance payment scheme, and any other tenancy type not included in this list. [9041/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 308 and 309 together.

The Social Housing Strategy 2020 targets the provision of over 110,000 social housing units, through the delivery of 35,000 new social housing units and meeting the housing needs of some 75,000 households mainly through the Housing Assistance Payment.

Social housing targets have been set for each local authority out to 2017 and are available on my Department's website, along with the associated provisional funding allocations, at the following link: <http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/News/MainBody,41016,en.htm>.

Over 13,000 social housing units were delivered in 2015, the first full year of implementation of the Strategy. This represents an 86% increase in unit delivery above 2014. It was achieved in a very difficult operating environment and represents a good start to the Strategy's implementation. The targets for 2016 are again ambitious and I expect that over 17,000 social housing units will be provided this year.

In January 2016, in collaboration with the Housing Agency, I published the Social Housing Output in 2015 report, detailing how the 13,000 units were delivered across all the social housing programmes in 2015. The report is available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.environ.ie/housing/social-housing/social-housing-strategy/social-housing-output-2015>.

Additional data on the breakdown of output in 2015, across all social housing delivery programmes, by local authority, is available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.environ.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>.

Information regarding on-going output in 2016 is being gathered and will be collated and published in due course.

My Department does not hold information on the allocation of social housing supports to households on the waiting list, whether by local authority housing or other accommodation provided by a local authority. The allocation of such support is a matter for each housing authority in accordance with its allocation scheme made under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009.

Question No. 310 answered with Question No. 302.

Question No. 311 answered with Question No. 302.

Student Accommodation

312. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he will assist the Students Union in the University College Dublin with its promotion of the rent-a-room scheme following his meeting on 2 September 2015 with the president of the union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9067/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Rent-a-room relief was introduced with the aim of increasing the availability of rented residential accommodation. Under the scheme, rooms rented in a person's sole or main residence as residential accommodation, including rooms let to students for the academic year are exempt from tax, PRSI and USC since 1 January 2015.

4 May 2016

The annual limit on exempt income is €12,000. The governing legislation is contained in section 216A Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997, and comes within the remit of the Minister for Finance.

Question No. 313 answered with Question No. 302.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

314. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on the fiscal risks associated with a legally binding European Union effort sharing decision on climate change covering 2013 to 2020, which necessitates a 20% greenhouse gas reduction in certain sectors on 2005 levels (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9086/16]

315. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the details of the projected purchases of carbon credits that he forecasts purchasing for failure to comply with the European Union effort sharing decisions which necessitates a 20% greenhouse gas reduction in certain sectors on 2005 levels, by amount, by year, by relevant sector in tabular form. [9087/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 314 and 315 together.

For each year between 2013 and 2020, Ireland has a greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction target under the 2009 Effort Sharing Decision (ESD) No. 406/2009/EC. For the year 2020 itself, the target set for Ireland is that emissions should be 20 per cent below their value in 2005. This is jointly the most demanding 2020 reduction target allocated under the ESD and one shared only by Denmark and Luxembourg. The 2013 target is based on the average of emissions for the years 2008-2010. The target for each of the years 2014 through 2019 is on a straight-line trajectory between the targets for 2013 and 2020, and surpluses in one year can be used to cover deficits in any subsequent year. The average incidence of these targets is a 12% reduction relative to 2005.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published in March 2016 projected emissions for 2020 which indicate that Ireland's emissions in 2020 could be in the range of 6-11% below 2005 levels. On a cumulative basis, Ireland will have a deficit of between 4 and 12 Megatonnes Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (MtCO₂ e). The projections suggest that Ireland may have a cumulative deficit of units in 2018 or 2019. Some of this deficit can be addressed by means of the retirement of units carried forward from the 2008-2012 period, and some additional purchases may be required depending on the out-turn. It is not possible to quantify these at present, having regard to both the quantum and price of carbon units to be purchased at the time.

A Member State demonstrating compliance with an annual target retires Annual Emissions Allocations (or units from the Kyoto Protocol Flexible Mechanisms) approximately 18 months after the year end, so it is unlikely that any expenditure required will occur before 2020 at the earliest.

The extent of the challenge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in line with our EU and international commitments, is well understood by the Government, as reflected in the National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development, published in April 2014, and now underpinned by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 which was enacted in December 2015. The National Policy Position provides a high-level policy direction for the adoption and implementation by Government of plans to enable the State to move to a

low-carbon economy by 2050. Statutory authority for the plans is set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.

In accordance with Section 4 of the Act, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government must submit a National Mitigation Plan to Government for approval by June 2017 at the latest. Work is well underway on the development of the National Mitigation Plan, the primary objective of which will be to track implementation of measures already underway and identify additional measures in the longer term to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and progress the overall national low carbon transition agenda to 2050. The first iteration of the National Mitigation Plan will place particular focus on putting the necessary measures in place to address the challenge to 2020 but also in terms of planning ahead to ensure that appropriate policies and measures will be in place beyond that.

The ultimate objective of successive National Mitigation Plans is to incrementally achieve this low carbon transition vision by 2050. In that context, the National Mitigation Plan will have regard to Ireland's obligations under the current 2009 Effort Sharing Decision and any likely future EU and international obligations that may arise, including new targets to be agreed under the 2030 climate and energy package.

Traveller Accommodation

316. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the minimum distance limit between accommodation units on temporary Traveller halting sites. [9090/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Section 8.14 of the Guidelines for Traveller Accommodation - Basic Services and Facilities for Caravans Pending the Provision of Permanent Accommodation (1998), as provided for under section 29 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, sets out that, generally, there should be a minimum separation distance of 6m between caravans and 9m between a caravan and a building or other structure. These distances may be reduced by the use of suitably located screen walls which can provide a barrier to the spread of fire. These distance guidelines apply to caravans in temporary or permanent residential caravan parks for Travellers. Also, the location of caravans should be such as to reduce the risk of fire between caravans and a building, or from a building to a caravan.

My Department initiated a Programme to Review Fire Safety in Traveller Accommodation in December 2015. A working draft "Guide to Fire Safety in existing Traveller Accommodation" was developed to assist local authorities in carrying out the Review. The Guide, which brings together relevant fire safety information, advice, guidance and fire safety standards applicable to existing Traveller accommodation into a single reference document, restates that, in general, the recommended layouts of sites are to provide a minimum of 6 metres separation between each caravan to prevent fire spread.

The above-mentioned Guidelines are available from my Department's website at-

<http://www.environ.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/Developmentand-Housing/Housing/FileDownload%2C43038%2Cen.PDF>

Rural Development Programme

317. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the funding available under the rural development scheme, the village and town renewal scheme, or any other scheme, by which a parent can be subsidised for exorbitant Internet usage charges due to residence in a remote area with limited Internet services to download tailored online educational programmes crucial to the progression of the child's education and learning development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9130/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan): The LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 will provide €250 million in financial resources to support the development of sustainable rural communities. Under the programme, funding will be distributed by Local Action Groups to rural communities in line with the local development strategies developed within each sub-regional area in Ireland. The broadband sub-theme of the Rural Development Programme supports local actions that complement national initiatives aimed at developing a comprehensive rural broadband infrastructure only.

In addition to this, my Department has introduced a number of measures to support rural Ireland, including the Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ) pilot scheme and the new Town and Village Enhancement scheme which is due to be rolled out in the near future. It will see an investment package of €30 million to support the revitalisation of towns and villages with a view to improving the living and working environment in communities and enhancing their potential to support increased economic activity into the future.

The scheme will be multi-annual in nature and it is proposed to allocate €5m to the scheme each year from 2016 to 2021. It will be delivered by Local Authorities in conjunction with local communities as part of a concerted effort to support the development of rural towns and villages.

It should be noted that the LEADER broadband sub-theme, the REDZ's pilot and the new Town and Village Enhancement scheme are not intended to subsidise internet usage charges or to cover broadband infrastructure, which is covered under the National Broadband Plan.

Water Charges Data

318. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the cost to the Exchequer if all moneys paid to Irish Water in domestic water charges up to 1 April 2016 were fully refunded by the State. [9140/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Irish Water's customer billing and collection levels are a matter for the utility. Irish Water has published information on bill payment levels for the first three billing cycles on its website at www.water.ie.

The €110.8m collected in respect of domestic water charges is the amount of cash (net of rebates) collected as at 11 January 2016. The number of customers who had made a payment to 11 January was 928,000. Irish Water is currently finalising collection details in relation to its fourth billing cycle and it is expected that information relating to same will be published shortly by the company.

Irish Water has established a dedicated team to deal with representations and queries from public representatives. The team can be contacted via email to oireachtasmembers@water.ie or by telephone on a dedicated number, 1890 578 578.

Insurance Coverage

319. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to clarify the matter regarding meetings held over winter 2015-2016 with representatives from the insurance industry; if he has reached agreement on home owners being refused flood cover because of perceived threat of flooding; if he will advise residents accordingly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9171/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): Issues relating to flood insurance are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Finance who is responsible for the legislative framework for insurance regulation and development of the insurance sector. I have no role in relation to this matter.

Building Regulations Application

320. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the status of the new building regulations (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9182/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): The legally enforceable minimum performance requirements which apply to dwellings in general are set out in twelve Parts (classified as Parts A to M) of the Building Regulations and apply to new dwellings or, in certain circumstances, to an existing dwelling which is undergoing an extension, material alteration or material change of use.

Part L of the Building Regulations addresses the conservation of fuel and energy in buildings and sets stringent minimum energy performance standards for dwellings in accordance with the requirements and methodologies set out in Directive 2010/31/EU on the energy performance of buildings. The latest Part L requirements came into effect on and from 1 December 2011.

Detailed Technical Guidance Documents (TGDs) are published by my Department to accompany each part of the Building Regulations, including Part L, in order to demonstrate how the requirements of the regulations can be achieved in practice.

Owners, designers and builders are free to make their own choices in relation to the most appropriate heating system for any given dwelling provided the dwelling complies with the minimum energy performance standards as set out in Part L/TGD L 2011. Open fire places may still be specified and installed in dwellings although this form of heating performs relatively poorly in energy efficiency terms (i.e. circa 30% compared to the approximately 80% efficiency achieved by a well-performing stove). As such, the open fire place does not provide an optimum contribution to the high energy performance standard required of a modern, low energy dwelling. Where regarded as desirable by homeowners, the open fire tends to be used only as a secondary source of heating and the dwelling concerned must also otherwise achieve the minimum energy performance standards as set out in Part L/TGD L 2011 which apply generally to all dwellings.

Energy Efficiency

321. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of public lights and the cost, by county, in tabular form; his plans to retrofit public lighting and to invest in alternative light sources; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [8964/16]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): Provision and maintenance of public lighting is the responsibility of each individual local authority and in the case of motorways Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).

In my role as Energy Minister, I have an interest in ensuring that the significant potential of public lighting to deliver energy efficiency is realised in pursuit of the 33% energy efficiency target for all public sector bodies. The upgrading of public lighting by Local Authorities and TII, using proven energy efficient technologies, will be an important project in the forthcoming Public Sector Energy Efficiency Action Plan.

A National Public Lighting Steering Group was established in 2014 to provide strategic direction and further impetus for the upgrading of public lighting in Ireland. The Group is chaired by the City & County Managers Association (CCMA) and includes representatives from TII, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and My Department.

Under the leadership of CCMA and TII, and with funding support from both of those bodies, work is currently underway on preparation of inventories of current lighting assets across the various authorities. This will enable procurement of the upgrade of the lighting stock to deliver energy efficiencies and cost and maintenance savings for the relevant public bodies. I understand that that inventory and cost information will be issued in the context of that procurement exercise.

Energy Efficiency

322. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he plans to introduce Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland grant assistance for homes built after 2006. [8981/16]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): Since 2009 the Better Energy programme, administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on behalf of my Department, has provided over €400 million for energy efficiency upgrades in almost 300,000 homes, supporting an average of 2,300 jobs per annum in the construction sector. The aim of the programme is to improve the energy efficiency of homes built prior to the introduction of more energy efficient building standards.

Dwellings constructed on or after 1 July 2006 are subject to Statutory Instrument No. 873 of 2005, Building Regulations (Amendment) Regulations and subsequent revisions. These regulations, transposing the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), require all new homes to meet certain energy efficiency standards. These standards include limiting the CO₂ emissions associated with energy use, limiting heat loss through the fabric of the building, controlling the output of the space heating, hot water systems and limiting the heat loss from pipes, ducts and vessels used for the transport or storage of heated water or air. Therefore, homes constructed in accordance with this legislation do not require the type of upgrades supported by the Better Energy Programme. Consequently, there are no plans to include homes built after 2006 in the Better Energy Programme.

Telecommunications Infrastructure

323. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and

Natural Resources his views on the cost of a telephone service in an area (details supplied) in County Kerry compared to average costs nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9051/16]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):

The provision of fixed line electronic communications networks connections is undertaken on a commercial basis by competing networks providers.

The Commission for Communications Regulations (ComReg), the independent market regulator, has imposed a universal service obligation (USO) on eircom Limited (trading as “eir”) to provide fixed line telephone services at geographically averaged prices across the State to ensure all users have access to standard usage charges.

Any complaint that eir is failing to comply with its USO obligation in any particular case should be addressed directly to ComReg, which is independent in the exercise of its function in accordance with a requirement of section 11 of the Communications Regulations Act 2002.

I have no statutory authority to participate in ComReg’s investigation of any complaint that eir is failing to perform its USO obligation to apply standard charges across the State or in any subsequent prosecution by ComReg of any related offence.

National Broadband Plan

324. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources further to Parliamentary Question No. 463 of 20 April 2016, to reply to the two questions raised, namely, the adequacy of the national broadband strategy in view of concerns raised by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation as outlined, and the cost of upgrading the national broadband strategy to the specifications outlined in the question. [9085/16]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):

The Government’s National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This will be achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

The Broadband Intervention strategy for Ireland, which is available at

<http://www.dcenr.gov.ie/communications/en-ie/Pages/Publication/Ireland's-Broadband-Intervention-Strategy-update.aspx>,

sets out a detailed service specification including a requirement that the State-funded network must

- be capable of delivering high-quality, high speed broadband of at least 30 mbps download and 6 mbps upload to all citizens

- be capable of catering for higher performance in the future so as to keep pace with consumer demand

- ensure the availability of high quality wholesale services to allow retail competition to develop.

During pre-procurement consultations, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation correctly highlighted the need to address the specific needs of businesses. This is reflected

in the Intervention Strategy published in December 2015, and, in this context, bidder(s) will be invited to put forward minimum speeds for businesses, which can be built into the service standards of the winning bidder(s) contract.

Because a competitive procurement process is currently in train, it would be neither advisable nor appropriate to speculate about the potential overall cost of the NBP at this stage. Ultimately, the outcome of the procurement process will determine the final cost of the intervention and will influence the amount of Exchequer funding that will be required for the NBP.

Broadband Service Provision

325. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the funding he can provide to parents to install a landline telephone in their home to assist a child with severe learning disabilities to avail of broadband services in order to download tailored online programmes which are crucial to the progression of the child's education and learning development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9128/16]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The provision of fixed line electronic communications networks connections and broadband services to users is undertaken on a commercial basis by competing electronic communications networks and services providers.

The Commission for Communications Regulation has imposed a universal service obligation on Eir, which, among other things, obliges it to provide landline connections at a standard connection charge across the country unless the costs incurred in any individual case exceeds €7,000. The standard connection charge is currently €121.93.

My Department has no funding available to it to assist users to meet the standard charge imposed by Eir for connections to its network.

National Broadband Plan

326. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when the national broadband plan will be operational in Saint Johnston, in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9144/16]

327. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when the national broadband plan will be operational in Corlea, in Ballyshannon, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9145/16]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 326 and 327 together.

The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This is being achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

The commercial telecommunications sector has invested over €2 billion in network upgrades and enhanced services in the last four years, and is continuing to invest. These very significant investments represent a step change in the quality of broadband services available.

On 22 December 2015, I formally launched the procurement process for the State intervention to provide high quality, high speed broadband to all premises in Ireland that may not be served through commercial investment. The formal procurement process commenced with the publication of the Pre-qualification Questionnaire and Project Information Memorandum. Five responses were received from prospective bidders to this stage of the competitive procurement process by the deadline of 31 March. This second stage in the process will be formal Invitation to Participate in Dialogue (ITPD) to shortlisted bidders. This is scheduled to commence in June and will take place over the Summer. The timing of each stage of the procurement is dependent on a number of factors including the number of bidders shortlisted and the complexities that may be encountered during the dialogue process.

The High Speed Broadband Map 2020, which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie, shows the extent of the State Intervention area. The areas marked BLUE, including 93% of the townland of Saint Johnston, represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services. Based on information received from commercial operators, a fibre build has commenced in this area and high speed broadband will be available shortly. The Department continues to monitor the commercial deployment plans in the BLUE area to ensure that all of the 1.6m premises, where commercial operators have committed to providing services will have access to High Speed Broadband of at least 30mbps.

The areas marked AMBER, including all of Corlea, Ballyshannon and 7% of Saint Johnston represent the target areas for the State Intervention. Members of the public can view whether their premises are in the BLUE or AMBER area by accessing the High Speed Broadband Map and entering their Eircode.

The Intervention Strategy sets out a detailed service specification including a requirement that the State-funded network must be capable of delivering high-quality, high speed broadband of at least 30mbps download and 6mbps upload. It must also be capable of catering for higher performance in the future so as to keep pace with consumer demand.

The intention is to build out the network in the AMBER area as quickly as possible. The Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) on the optimum rollout strategy, and on the sequencing of the network deployment to maximise efficiencies during network build, having regard to business and consumer needs, and to areas of particularly poor service and areas of strong demand. All these factors will need to be balanced against the most efficient network rollout and will be agreed during the procurement process.

Engagement with industry stakeholders as part of the pre-procurement consultations has indicated that the network in the Amber area could be achieved within 3-5 years, after contract(s) is awarded.

National Broadband Plan

328. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources to provide the timeframe on the implementation of a broadband network in Tarmonbarry, County Roscommon. [9153/16]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This is being achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention

in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

The commercial telecommunications sector has invested over €2 billion in network upgrades and enhanced services in the last four years, and is continuing to invest. These very significant investments represent a step change in the quality of broadband services available.

On 22 December 2015, I formally launched the procurement process for the State intervention to provide high quality, high speed broadband to all premises in Ireland that may not be served through commercial investment. The formal procurement process commenced with the publication of the Pre-qualification Questionnaire and Project Information Memorandum. Five responses were received from prospective bidders to this stage of the competitive procurement process by the deadline of 31 March. This second stage in the process will be formal Invitation to Participate in Dialogue (ITPD) to shortlisted bidders. This is scheduled to commence in June and will take place over the Summer. The timing of each stage of the procurement is dependent on a number of factors including the number of bidders shortlisted and the complexities that may be encountered during the dialogue process.

The High Speed Broadband Map 2020, which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie shows the extent of the State Intervention area.

The areas marked BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services. The Department continues to monitor the commercial deployment plans in the BLUE area to ensure that all of the 1.6m premises, where commercial operators have committed to providing services will have access to High Speed Broadband of at least 30mbps.

The areas marked AMBER, including the village of Tarmonbarry, represent the target areas for the State Intervention. Members of the public can view whether their premises are in the BLUE or AMBER area by accessing the High Speed Broadband Map and entering their Eircode.

The Intervention Strategy sets out a detailed service specification including a requirement that the State-funded network must be capable of delivering high-quality, high speed broadband of at least 30mbps download and 6mbps upload. It must also be capable of catering for higher performance in the future so as to keep pace with consumer demand.

The intention is to build out the network in the AMBER area as quickly as possible. The Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) on the optimum rollout strategy, and on the sequencing of the network deployment to maximise efficiencies during network build, having regard to business and consumer needs, and to areas of particularly poor service and areas of strong demand. All these factors will need to be balanced against the most efficient network rollout and will be agreed during the procurement process.

Engagement with industry stakeholders as part of the pre-procurement consultations has indicated that the network in the Amber area could be achieved within 3-5 years, after contract(s) is awarded.

Fish Farming

329. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he is aware of a proposal by Inland Fisheries Ireland to close fish hatchery farms at Cullionmore, in Mullingar, County Westmeath and in Roscrea, County Tipperary, which are the only two brown trout hatcheries left in Ireland; if he will consult the said board with a view to

getting this proposal scrapped as there is no cost saving but the proposal will cause significant adverse circumstances and difficulties for lakes which are reliant on farm-reared brown trout and negatively impact upon the angling industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9191/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Joe McHugh): The proposal around rationalising the fish farm operations of Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is a day to day operational matter for the Board of IFI.

I understand, however, that IFI's intention is to phase out fish farming operations over the coming years and that it is intended by IFI that the phase out plan will include consultation with affected stakeholders.

I would be happy to organised a detailed briefing for the Deputy with IFI.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

330. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the implications for counties Cavan and Monaghan of the further delay in the roll out of the national broadband plan; if he is aware of the urgent need to provide much-needed investment in upgrading the broadband telecommunications infrastructure throughout both counties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9193/16]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure that every citizen and business, regardless of location, has access to a high quality, high speed broadband service. This is being achieved through a combination of commercial investments and a State led intervention in areas where commercial services will not be provided.

The commercial telecommunications sector has invested over €2 billion in network upgrades and enhanced services in the last four years, and is continuing to invest. These very significant investments represent a step change in the quality of broadband services available.

On 22 December 2015, I formally launched the procurement process for the State intervention to provide high quality, high speed broadband to all premises in Ireland that may not be served through commercial investment. The formal procurement process commenced with the publication of the Pre-qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) and Project Information Memorandum. Responses were received from five consortia, which include over 30 individual companies, by the deadline of 31 March. The second stage in the process will be formal Invitation to Participate in Dialogue (ITPD) to shortlisted bidders. This is scheduled to commence in June and will take place over the Summer. The timing of each stage of the procurement is dependent on a number of factors including the number of bidders shortlisted and the complexities that may be encountered during the dialogue process.

The number of responses received on 31 March, the complexity of the process, and an earlier extension to the PQQ submission deadline which was requested by respondents, will necessitate an adjustment of a number of months to the anticipated timeframe for tender negotiation and contract award.

The High Speed Broadband Map 2020, which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie shows the extent of the State Intervention area. The areas marked BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services. The Department continues to monitor the commercial deployment plans in the

BLUE area to ensure that all of the 1.6m premises, where commercial operators have committed to providing services will have access to High Speed Broadband of at least 30mbps.

The areas marked AMBER represent the target areas for the State Intervention. Members of the public can view whether their premises in Cavan and Monaghan are in the BLUE or AMBER area by accessing the High Speed Broadband Map and entering their Eircode.

The Intervention Strategy sets out a detailed service specification including a requirement that the State-funded network must be capable of delivering high-quality, high speed broadband of at least 30mbps download and 6mbps upload. It must also be capable of catering for higher performance in the future so as to keep pace with consumer demand.

I am conscious of the need to deliver the State intervention as a matter of priority and the intention is to build out the network in the AMBER area as quickly as possible. The Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) on the optimum rollout strategy, and on the sequencing of the network deployment to maximise efficiencies during network build, having regard to business and consumer needs, and to areas of particularly poor service and areas of strong demand. All these factors will need to be balanced against the most efficient network rollout and will be agreed during the procurement process.

Engagement with industry stakeholders as part of the pre-procurement consultations has indicated that the network in the Amber area could be achieved within 3-5 years, after contract(s) is awarded.

Road Improvement Schemes

331. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the programme of works being carried out on tertiary roads and culs-de-sac, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8965/16]

332. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the uptake of the community involvement scheme over its lifetime, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8966/16]

333. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport why the local improvement scheme is not operational; and his plans to reintroduce the scheme for non-county roads to allow the many families living on such roads an opportunity to travel to and from their homes safely. [8967/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 331 to 333, inclusive, together.

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.

There has been a longstanding provision for local authorities to seek community involvement in the improvement and maintenance work on suitable local roads and to facilitate this, local authorities are permitted to allocate a portion of their State grant funding to eligible schemes.

As indicated previously to the Deputy a separate Community Involvement Scheme (CIS) pi-

lot scheme did operate for two years in 2013 and 2014. Following its completion CIS reverted to the position where local authorities may set aside 7.5% of their RI and RM grants for CIS schemes if they so wish. Applications under the scheme are made directly to the local authority and managed by it.

The Local Improvement Scheme also remains in place for 2016. This Scheme provides funding for private roads and laneways, the maintenance and improvement of which is, in the first instance, a matter for the relevant landowner. While the LIS does not have a ring-fenced allocation, local authorities may use a proportion of State grant funding for LIS should they wish to do so.

As the operation of both the CIS and LIS schemes are managed locally by the local authority, my Department does not have details of the schemes undertaken in local areas or the costs involved. A table is provided showing the uptake for the pilot CIS operated by my Department in 2013 and 2014.

There are no proposals at present to reintroduce a separate allocation for CIS or LIS. It is my view that each local authority is best placed to decide on allocations for these two schemes taking into account the own resource and grant funding available to it. In this context I continue to emphasise to local authorities the importance of prioritising roads maintenance when allocating own resources.

Local Authority	2013 and 2014 Grant Expenditure	No. of Schemes
Carlow County Council	€672,892	43
Cavan County Council	€1,521,399	66
Clare County Council	€953,339	50
Cork County Council	€1,829,886	75
Donegal County Council	€1,611,701	51
Galway County Council	€329,099	23
Kerry County Council	€344,964	12
Kildare County Council	€190,051	7
Kilkenny County Council	€729,410	21
Laois County Council	€501,756	26
Leitrim County Council	€972,235	46
Limerick City & County Council	€318,710	25
Longford County Council	€154,065	4
Louth County Council	€1,428,481	42
Mayo County Council	€909,474	56
Meath County Council	€1,651,383	51
Offaly County Council	€804,682	34
Roscommon County Council	€455,474	37
Sligo County Council	€398,606	11
Tipperary Councils	€1,428,638	57
Waterford County Council	€261,089	8
Westmeath County Council	€492,640	22
Wexford County Council	€1,284,142	21
Wicklow County Council	€219,000	6

Roads Maintenance Funding

334. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he

will ensure that where allocation of road restoration and maintenance moneys are being made to local authorities that a percentage of those moneys are ring-fenced for tertiary council roads in direct proportion to kilometres of these roads as compared to other road classifications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8971/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): 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.

The main grant programmes funded by my Department (Restoration Improvement, Restoration Maintenance and Discretionary Grant) are allocated on the basis of the length of the regional and local road network in a local authority area. In view of the fact that national roads and regional roads account for about 45% and 30% of overall road traffic respectively, the main requirement related to the Restoration Improvement and Maintenance Grants is that a minimum of 15% is expended on regional roads. Apart from that local authorities have considerable flexibility in allocating grant funding.

Overall, given funding constraints, I take the view that local authorities are best placed to assess how best to allocate available own resource and road grant funding within their areas. I have been emphasising to local authorities the importance of prioritising expenditure on roads when allocating own resources, including revenue from Local Property Tax receipts.

Roads Maintenance

335. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the classification of roads, the length in kilometres of each road, the moneys allocated in each of the past five years, and the timeframe for resurfacing, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8972/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): 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.

Grants in the main grant categories (Restoration Improvement, Restoration Maintenance and Discretionary Grant) are calculated based on the total length of the regional and local road network within a local authority area (in the case of a number of local authorities adjustment factors are applied to take account of higher traffic volumes). The relevant reference table, which is derived from information provided by local authorities in 2012, is set out. The regional and local road grant allocations and payments made to local authorities over the last five years are included in the allocation and payment booklets available in the Dáil library.

Questions - Written Answers

		LOCAL	-	-	-	-	TRAF- FIC FAC- TOR*
County Council (Incl TC and Borough Areas)	Regional m	Local Primary m	Local Secondary m	Local Tertiary m	AllLocal m	Total Non-National m	
Carlow Co Council	186,000	349,000	389,000	270,000	1,008,000	1,194,000	1.0
Cavan Co Council	399,445	741,435	1,337,223	402,337	2,480,995	2,880,440	1.0
Clare Co Council	633,450	1,148,545	1,448,508	820,874	3,417,927	4,051,377	1.0
Cork Co Council	1,402,110	3,238,126	4,970,444	2,256,778	10,465,348	11,867,458	1.0
Donegal Co Council	800,200	1,985,964	2,077,440	1,261,158	5,324,562	6,124,762	1.0
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Co Council	105,917	94,700	87,218	379,379	561,297	667,214	0.0
Fingal Co Council	262,036	259,814	239,188	482,756	981,758	1,243,794	0.0
Galway Co Council	826,012	1,391,458	2,499,983	1,551,832	5,443,273	6,269,285	1.0
Kerry Co Council	525,000	1,191,000	1,208,000	1,403,000	3,802,000	4,327,000	1.0
Kildare Co Council	482,355	354,732	1,040,082	494,358	1,889,172	2,371,527	1.3
Kilkenny Co Council	421,015	809,331	1,365,860	408,409	2,583,600	3,004,615	1.0
Laois Co Council	348,739	613,017	601,675	506,539	1,721,231	2,069,970	1.0
Leitrim Co Council	336,000	668,000	563,000	538,000	1,769,000	2,105,000	1.0
Limerick Co Council	483,000	1,015,000	1,423,000	509,000	2,947,000	3,430,000	1.0
Longford Co Council	154,084	428,841	536,586	401,898	1,367,325	1,521,409	1.0
Louth Co Council	266,214	331,873	712,849	344,231	1,388,953	1,655,167	1.0
Mayo Co Council	628,824	1,293,430	1,627,998	2,537,581	5,459,009	6,087,833	1.0
Meath Co Council	574,420	560,949	786,924	1,230,608	2,578,481	3,152,901	1.3
Monaghan Co Council	302,069	532,169	584,023	1,006,222	2,122,414	2,424,483	1.0
North Tipperary Co Council	411,000	942,000	735,000	464,000	2,141,000	2,552,000	1.0
Offaly Co Council	388,375	530,560	599,567	535,436	1,665,563	2,053,938	1.0
Roscommon Co Council	372,705	769,759	1,508,769	1,078,791	3,357,319	3,730,024	1.0
Sligo Co Council	224,193	655,578	935,457	694,655	2,285,690	2,509,883	1.0
South Dublin Co Council	106,189	49,749	632,384	103,481	785,614	891,803	0.0
South Tipperary Co Council	485,000	963,500	909,529	467,500	2,340,529	2,825,529	1.0
Waterford Co Council	382,156	1,001,274	1,000,016	232,752	2,234,042	2,616,198	1.0
Westmeath Co Council	310,000	508,000	916,000	405,000	1,829,000	2,139,000	1.0
Wexford Co Council	476,652	952,328	1,340,765	557,915	2,851,008	3,327,660	1.0
Wicklow Co Council	444,793	477,887	932,967	260,097	1,670,951	2,115,744	1.0
CITY COUNCILS							
Dublin City Council	214,990	37,015	47,290	514,010	931,440	1,146,430	0.0
Cork City Council	43,750	58,230	75,600	285,340	419,170	462,920	2.0
Galway City Council	35,000	19,700	50,720	174,890	245,300	280,300	2.0
CITY COUNCIL AREAS							
Limerick City Council Area	38,000	24,000	9,800	157,500	191,300	229,300	2.0
Waterford City Council Area	38,600	29,260	27,770	135,030	192,050	230,650	2.0
Total	13,108,293	24,026,225	33,220,635	22,871,357	80,451,321	93,559,615	

*Traffic Factor A factor of 2.0 is applied to road lengths in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford City Council areas to take account of higher traffic volumes.

A factor of 1.3 is applied to road lengths in Meath and Kildare to take take account of higher traffic volumes accessing the GDA.

A factor of 0.0 is applied to road lengths in Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin as they are self-funding under the main grant categories.

A factor of 1.0 is applied to all other councils.

National Transport Authority Data

336. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of complaints made to the National Transport Authority against taxi drivers, by category of complaint, by number of drivers against whom complaints were made, by number of enforcement actions per category of complaint, by number and type of prosecution, by number of driver licences revoked, by number of staff dealing directly with complaints by year since 2013, under section 64 of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8866/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The regulation of the taxi industry is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act, 2013.

I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

State Properties Data

337. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 857 of 14 April 2016, the length of time each site listed has been vacant. [8894/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The property below is vacant since November 2014.

Vacant Property	Location	Local Authority	Square Metres	Car Park
Rocket House, Dun Laoghaire Harbour	Dun Laoghaire	Rathdown County Council	Internal Floor approx. 22.77/ External floor 31.33	No

Sport and Recreational Development

338. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he continues to make contact with various promoters in the sporting sector worldwide with a view to encouraging the location of major events here, with obvious economic benefit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8920/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): The hosting of major sports events can generate additional international visits and help put Ireland onto travel itineraries as a holiday destination. Accordingly, I support the ongoing efforts of the Tourism Agencies and the National Governing Bodies of Sport, in conjunction with their colleagues in Northern Ireland where appropriate, to attract international events, subject, of course, to an assessment of the costs and benefits involved.

In this regard, the Event Ireland Division within Fáilte Ireland continues to identify and bid for events in partnership with the relevant stakeholders. Amongst the bids they have recently won are the 2016 World Field Archery Championships and the 2016 World Shore Angling Championships.

The FAI and Dublin City Council, with Government support, won their bid in September 2014 to host part of the UEFA Euro 2020 tournament at the Aviva stadium. The Government also assisted the IRFU in its successful bid to host the Women's Rugby World Cup in 2017 and the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive announced their support in December 2014 for the preparation of a joint bid to host the Rugby World Cup in 2023. The bid has the full support of both Governments who will be working very closely with the IRFU to ensure that the best possible bid is made to bring the Rugby World Cup to Ireland in 2023.

Our tourism and sporting infrastructure are amongst the finest in Europe and are well capable of providing the modern facilities required by participants and spectators alike. We will continue to look for opportunities to grow sport related tourism and develop sport in Ireland by hosting major events with significant overseas revenue generating potential.

Public Transport

339. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the degree to which rail and bus services in County Kildare are co-ordinated to meet the requirements of commuters in the various towns and villages throughout the county in full; the extent to which he continues to be appraised in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8921/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

My Department is continually kept informed on relevant developments by the NTA through various means, including a formal monthly meeting between officials.

Road Projects Status

340. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when Transport Infrastructure Ireland will commence upgrading the N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin road in County Sligo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8947/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual national road projects is a matter for the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the relevant local authority. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

The transport element of the Capital Plan "*Building on Recovery*" makes provision for several roads projects to commence which are targeted at removing critical bottlenecks or upgrading inadequate sections of road including the N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin upgrade scheme.

In this context, TII is in the process of drawing up an implementation programme in relation to the projects included in the 7 year Capital Plan taking into account annual budget allocations.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

341. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide grant assistance of €80,000 to a school (details supplied) under the sports capital grant scheme to facilitate the remaining fundraising required by the school which has undertaken a huge amount of successful fundraising to meet the required costs of €230,000 for the overall project, with particular reference to the benefit of this project to the local community; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9024/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): No decision has been made on the timing of any future rounds of the Sports Capital Programme.

Any future rounds of the Programme will be advertised in the national press. Any interested group should register now on www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie as this will be the only way to apply under any future rounds of the Programme.

Educational institutions may only apply for funding with local sports groups.

National Car Test

342. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to review the policy whereby vintage cars require a national car test every 12 months, despite the fact that many of them do less than 800 km travel per year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9057/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Given the competing road safety priorities which my Department has had to deal with, my officials could only turn their attention to the RSA's review of the arrangements in relation to the roadworthiness testing of vintage vehicles in the latter part of 2015.

The RSA's review has now been examined by my officials and recommendations have been submitted to me for my consideration.

I appreciate the value of the vintage and veteran vehicle movement and have reiterated on a number of occasions that none of the recommendations contained in the RSA's review would involve those who currently enjoy an exemption from compulsory testing, that is, those owners of cars and motor caravans first registered prior to 1st January 1980 and used for social and domestic purposes, being brought within the compulsory roadworthiness testing regime.

Road Improvement Schemes

343. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he will make improvements to the N2 road in County Meath, with particular regard to Rath, Primatestown Cross and Kilmoon in Ashbourne, to improve traffic flow and reduce delays, given the recommendations from a recent traffic study commissioned by Meath County Council which has been provided to Transport Infrastructure Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [9127/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects (such as the N2 in Co. Meath) is a matter for the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with Meath County Council.

Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Applications

344. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of an appeal to the Peatlands Council by a person (details supplied). [9092/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Applicants to the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme, administered by my Department, may appeal their case to the Peatlands Council in the event that they are informed that the qualifying criteria of the scheme have not been met. The Council may then make recommendations to me, as Minister, on such cases.

While the terms of reference in relation to the Peatlands Council's appeals function have been agreed between the Council and myself, as Minister, the operation of the appeals function is a matter for the Council itself.

I am advised that the Appeals Sub Group of the Peatlands Council intends to consider the case referred to in the Deputy's Question, amongst others, at its next meeting scheduled for 31 May 2016 and to determine the recommendation it will make to the Peatlands Council.

I understand that it is intended that the Peatlands Council will hold its next meeting in early June 2016 and the recommendation of the Appeals Sub Group in this case will be considered at that meeting with a view to finalisation of this appeal.

Easter Rising Commemorations

345. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of a national independence day for Ireland (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9183/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The commemoration of the 1916 Rising - the historical moment which the State has recognised as marking the birth of our sovereign nation - traditionally takes place over the Easter bank holiday weekend. Accordingly, my Department has no plans to create a national independence day.

National Concert Hall

346. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on correspondence (details supplied) concerning access for wheelchair users in the National Concert Hall; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8930/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I have no responsibility for the day to day operations of the National Concert Hall which operates as a statutory body under the National Cultural Institutions (National Concert Hall) Act 2015. However, I will bring the issue raised by the Deputy to the attention of the National Concert Hall and ask the Hall to respond directly to the Deputy.

Wildlife Conservation

347. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the measures she has taken and the funding she has provided to conserve and manage red grouse; if funding is provided to voluntary organisations for these purposes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9014/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department is involved with a range of organisations and groups in a number of initiatives intended to secure the conservation of the red grouse. There are many examples around the country of very positive collaboration between farmers, landowners, game shooters, field sports clubs, environmental NGOs and State agencies on the restoration of this species.

In 2013, my Department published a Species Action Plan for red grouse which charts the way forward for the conservation of the grouse. The plan was produced as a collaborative exercise with the Irish Grey Partridge Conservation Trust, Countryside Alliance Ireland, the National Association of Regional Game Councils, the Irish Red Grouse Association, the Golden Eagle Trust, BirdWatch Ireland, the Irish Red & White Setter Association, the Irish Kennel Club, IFA Countryside and Cró na mBraonáin Red Grouse sanctuary, and my Department is supporting ongoing meetings of the parties involved.

My Department has also provided funding and logistical support to the Boleybrack and Ballydangan Bog red grouse projects and is directly involved in the management of habitat for grouse in National Parks and other lands in various parts of the country.

Key to the conservation of grouse is the restoration of degraded habitats. Substantial improvements have been achieved in grazing management on hill commonages in the past 15 years and one benefit is the improvement in the conservation status of the species in areas such as the Nephin and Twelve Bens mountain ranges.

My Department also carries out monitoring of the grouse. This year there will be targeted red grouse surveys in counties Clare and Mayo to inform future habitat management measures and also to refine survey methodologies for future more broad scale surveys.

Memorial Plaques

348. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when she will issue a reply to an interim response (details supplied) regarding a war memorial; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9016/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): A final reply has issued to the Deputy in response to his query regarding a war memorial.

Waterways Issues

349. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she can accommodate access to shore power and water, and safe access to boats for a person (details supplied) who is being requested to move by Waterways Ireland; the reason no alternative space with access to shore power has been offered to date, with particular reference to the fact that it is required for medical reasons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9022/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Waterways Ireland has informed me that it has been in communication with the person referred to by the Deputy since January 2016 when an offer of a fully serviced alternative berth was first made. As Waterways Ireland received no response to this offer, a further offer of a serviced space was made in the last fortnight but this has not been accepted to date.

Special Protection Areas Designation

350. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the facility in place, as administered by her, to alter the designation, on a quid pro quo basis, of hen harrier-type land, when the original designation is determined simply by a line on a map and does not take account of current and well established farming methods, allied to the fact whereby more obviously suitable land not currently designated adjoins, as this designation applies to participation in the green low-carbon agri-environment scheme as administered by the Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [9143/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am advised that the boundaries of the six SPAs designated for the conservation of the hen harrier were defined on foot of a scientific protocol to include lands that had proximity to known hen harrier breeding territories. Suitable habitat mainly included heath, bog, rough grassland and plantation forest of varying ages. I am further advised that it is not feasible to swap designations on adjacent lands as suggested.

My Department made available an extensive appeals process whereby landowners had the facility to object to their designation on scientific grounds. This resulted in some parcels of land to be removed from the SPA network where inspections showed they were of a type or condition (for example, improved agricultural land) that were not of significant conservation value for the SPA in question.

There has been some agricultural improvement of lands since the designations as such work was not a restricted activity in those areas.

Similar suitable habitat may exist in areas adjacent to the SPA designations but these lands were not included in the original advertised boundary as they were at some distance from known hen harrier breeding territories at that time.