

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 8, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 9 to 18, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 19 to 31, inclusive, answered orally.

Pensions Reform

32. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the progress that has been made in establishing an interdepartmental group, as indicated in correspondence (details supplied), to examine the issue of those who are forced to retire at 65 years of age but are not eligible for a pension until 66 years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18691/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Last January the previous Government approved the establishment of an Interdepartmental Working Group to consider policy designed to support fuller working lives. The Group is chaired by an Assistant Secretary from my Department and includes senior representatives from the Departments of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Social Protection, Justice, Health and Education.

The Group has examined the relevant issues in detail and has engaged with stakeholders. The report of the Group will be finalised shortly following which it will be submitted for the consideration of Government.

EU Issues

33. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his priorities during the Slovakian European Union Presidency and how these priorities may have changed due to the result of the referendum on the United Kingdom withdrawing from the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19718/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The programme of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union is based on four priorities: an economically strong Europe; a modern single market; sustainable migration and asylum policies; and a globally engaged Europe.

A key issue for which my Department has responsibility is Cohesion policy. The Slovak Presidency intends to lead a discussion on European Commission proposals that will assess

the benefits of the reformed Cohesion policy and outline areas to simplify and streamline it. Representing a Member State with more than four decades experience of Cohesion policy, I am keen to share Ireland's experience of delivering programmes with a view to seeing a greater focus on the objectives of the policy and an increased simplification for all those involved in delivering it.

Ireland was successful in securing more than €1 billion of Cohesion funding from the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund for the period 2014-2020, an increase of 8% over the period 2007-2013. This includes Ireland's contribution to the North South PEACE and INTERREG Programmes and the Ireland Wales INTERREG Programme.

Following the outcome of the UK Referendum on EU membership, the Government has made clear its commitment to the successful implementation of the programmes. Immediately following the Referendum result my officials contacted the Commission as well as representatives of the Northern Ireland Executive and the Scottish and Welsh Governments to underscore our commitment to the programmes and to discuss how they would continue to benefit from EU funding.

As regards the outcome of the UK Referendum on EU membership, we have advanced, and will continue to progress, comprehensive contingency work across Government in order to define our national interests and work out how best they can be protected during the negotiations process. As negotiations are unlikely to start for some months, there is time for the EU and its Member States to prepare.

The European Council will of course play the decisive role in the negotiations, making all the key decisions. The European Commission will also have an important role to play, and the final package will require the approval of the European Parliament, but the overall political direction of the process will be provided by the European Council.

Flood Prevention Measures

34. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will make available funds for the dredging of the Laune and Flesk Rivers in County Kerry to alleviate flooding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19564/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney): Neither the Laune nor the Flesk rivers form part of any Arterial Drainage Scheme which would fall under the remit of the Office of Public Works (OPW) under the 1945 Arterial Drainage Act. The OPW therefore has no responsibility for the maintenance of these rivers.

Local flooding issues are a matter, in the first instance, for each Local Authority to investigate and address, and Kerry County Council may carry out flood mitigation works using its own resources. The Office of Public Works operates a Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. This administrative Scheme's eligibility criteria, including a requirement that any measures are cost beneficial are published on the OPW website, www.opw.ie. It is open to the Council to submit a funding application under the Scheme. Any application received will be considered in accordance with the overall availability of resources for flood risk management and the scheme's eligibility criteria.

The core strategy for addressing the significant flood risks nationally is the Office of Public Works' (OPW) Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. Glenflesk and Killarney are two of 27 Areas for Further Assessment (AFAs) in the South West River Basin District being assessed under the South West CFRAM study. 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.

Under the South West CFRAM Study, draft predictive flood maps have been produced and were the subject of Public Consultation Days in Glenflesk on 21st October, 2014 and in Killarney on 23rd October, 2014. In addition, Public Consultation Days were held in Glenflesk and Killarney on 8th December, 2015 to present and discuss preliminary options to manage the assessed flood risks in these AFAs. The draft maps are now being finalised following the conclusion of the national statutory public consultation process on 23rd December, 2015.

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 that can address in a comprehensive and sustainable way the significant flood risks identified along the South West River Basin District. The draft Plans will include a prioritised list of measures to address flood risk in an environmentally sustainable and cost effective manner. These Plans will be available for public consultation from mid 2016.

The Government recently announced increased levels of investment in the area of flood relief as part of the overall Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021 and this investment programme will allow for consideration of measures arising from the Plans.

Public Sector Pensions Levy

35. Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will consider speeding up the restoration of the public service pension so that pensioners revert to their pre-financial emergency measures in the public interest legislation pensions by 1 January 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19755/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In June 2015, Government approved proposals for a significant amelioration of pension reductions which had been applied under the financial emergency (FEMPI) legislation to all public service pensions above specified thresholds. This amelioration of the Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR), which subsequently became law under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2015, provides for changes to occur in three phases, on 1 January 2016, 1 January 2017 and 1 January 2018.

On 1 January 2016, increases in the exemption thresholds for PSPR application were activated. These exemption threshold increases fully removed PSPR from a significant number of pensions with relatively lower values, while those pensions which continue to be impacted by PSPR received a boost of €400 per year.

On 1 January 2017, additional PSPR amelioration, acting principally via further exemption threshold increases, will fully remove PSPR from another significant tranche of public service pensioners, while at the same time boosting those pensions which remain affected by PSPR by €500 per year.

On 1 January 2018, the third phase of PSPR amelioration will ensure that all PSPR-impacted pensions with values up to €34,132 will be fully restored, meaning that PSPR will no longer affect such pensions, while those pensions which continue to be impacted by PSPR will get a boost of, in most cases, €780 per year.

These phased PSPR changes across the public service will cost an estimated €90 million on an annual basis and, when fully implemented, will ensure that only the top 20% higher value public service pensions will continue to be impacted by the PSPR.

In my annual report last month to the Houses of the Oireachtas under section 12 of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2013, I concluded that it was necessary to continue to apply the pay and pension measures under the FEMPI 2009 to 2013 Acts, including the PSPR. Consistent with that position, I do not plan to bring forward the pension restoration element due on 1 January 2018 to 1 January 2017.

Questions Nos. 36 to 38, inclusive, answered with Question No. 31.

Question No. 39 answered with Question No. 24.

Pension Provisions

40. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will contact the high level forum on the community voluntary sector regarding the provision of a pension scheme for community employment supervisors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19558/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The issue referred to in the Deputy's question concerns Community and Employment Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors who are seeking through their union representatives the allocation of Exchequer funding to implement a Labour Court recommendation relating to the provision of a pension scheme dating back to 2008. In this regard the position has been that it is not possible for the State to provide funding for such a scheme to employees of private companies notwithstanding the position that those companies are or were reliant on State funding.

This issue has, however, remained under review and in this context the Community Sector High Level Forum has been reconvened in order to examine the matter fully, having regard to the implications for costs and precedent.

Public Expenditure Policy

41. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to deal with capacity pressures within the public sector in the context of the Government's announced tax cut programme. [19752/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Government recognises that economic and social progress go hand in hand. Therefore, the Programme for a Partnership Government sets out a clear strategy for increasing spending in a sustainable way built on stable revenues. A key focus of the Government is on providing the best environment for job creation. Unemployment has fallen from a peak of over 15% to 7.8% in May this year. The Government's ambition is to help create 200,000 new jobs by 2020, including 135,000 outside of Dublin.

The Summer Economic Statement (SES) estimates that there will be cumulative net fiscal space of €11.3 billion over the period 2017 to 2021. The distribution of fiscal space is consistent with commitments in the Programme for a Partnership Government including:

- At least a 2:1 split between public spending increases and tax reductions.

- To increase the level of current expenditure from its 2016 base level by at least €6.75 billion by 2021.

- To deliver an additional €4.0 billion in cumulative capital expenditure over the period 2017 to 2021. In fact €5.1 billion will be delivered.

- To provide for a rainy day fund. It is proposed to contribute €1 billion per annum to a rainy day fund from 2019 onwards.

Delivering public services needs people and as regards staffing, in both the 2015 and 2016 Budgets, provision was made for significant additional staff in the Health Sector; more teachers, Special Need Assistants and Resource teachers in the Education sector; and additional Gardaí. Overall staffing levels increased by some 7,000 (2.3%) in the Public Service in 2015 and is projected to rise by a further 8,600 (2.8%) this year.

During this time, as the Deputy will be aware, the moratorium on recruitment has been replaced with delegated arrangements which give Departments greater flexibility in managing staffing resources, including recruitment and promotion. Central to the arrangements are Departments staying within pay bill ceilings. We will of course continue to grow our public services over the medium term but the delegated arrangements will ensure that we do so at affordable and sustainable levels.

Investment in public infrastructure is vital for the medium and long-term competitiveness of the economy as well as for underpinning social cohesion through provision of vital services to the public. The public capital plan published last September set out an exchequer spend of €27 billion on capital investment over six years. Under the Plan key investments will be made in transport, education, health and enterprise. In every part of the country, these investments will boost our competitiveness, create jobs, and upgrade our social infrastructure. If we add investment from the wider semi-state sector, and off-balance sheet mechanisms such as PPPs, total state investment amounts to €42 billion over the period. The SES sets out total extra spending on capital investment of €5.1 billion over the period of the plan, an increase of 18.5% on the previously proposed Exchequer component of the plan. The allocation of this additional funding will be determined as part of the mid-term review of the Capital Plan in 2017 and will take account of key emerging priorities.

Public Expenditure Policy

42. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he is satisfied with the current proposed ratio of two to one public investment to tax cuts as set out in the summer economic statement, or if he believes that spending the entire fiscal space for 2017 on public investment is a better option in the long run; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19730/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Summer Economic Statement (SES) recognises that economic and social progress go hand in hand. Only a strong economy supporting people at work can pay for the services needed to create a fair society. A key focus of the Government is on providing the best environment for job creation. Unemployment has fallen from a peak of over 15% to 7.8% in May this year. The Government's ambition is to help create 200,000 new jobs by 2020, including 135,000 outside of Dublin.

The SES estimates that there will be cumulative net fiscal space of €11.3 billion over the period 2017 to 2021 with a 2:1 ratio between increased spending on public services and tax

reductions. For 2017, this results in the allocation of €0.67 billion of total net fiscal space of €1 billion to expenditure increases.

However, this is the total additional spending planned for 2017. Some increases are already included in the base expenditure for 2017 arising from certain demographic pressures in Health, Social Protection and Education, the carry forward of Budget 2016 measures and the Public Capital Plan. When added to the €0.67 billion fiscal space, the full increase in gross voted current expenditure is €1.3 billion (2.5%) between 2016 and 2017 with gross voted capital expenditure increasing by €0.4 billion (10.5%).

The Deputy may also wish to note that the allocation to expenditure increases in 2017 of €0.67 billion set out in the SES exceeds the totality of the fiscal space amounting to €0.5 billion identified for 2017 at the time of Budget 2016 in October last.

The Government's intention is that by setting out the broad parameters of economic and fiscal policy over the medium term, the SES will help frame discussions with the Oireachtas on budget priorities for 2017.

Public Sector Pay

43. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will reverse the two tier pay and pension structures for new entrants to the public sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19802/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): For the majority of public servants the issue of addressing the difference in incremental salary scales between those public servants who entered public service employment since 2011 and those who entered before that date was addressed with the relevant union interests under the provisions of the Haddington Road Agreement (HRA). Any further consideration of remuneration adjustment for any group of public servants, including issues relating to more recently recruited public servants, will fall to be examined within the provisions of the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013 -2018 (Lansdowne Road Agreement). It will also of course have to comply with the terms of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts 2009 - 2015 (FEMPI), as well as its affordability being underpinned through delivering enhanced work place practices and productivity.

New entrants, including members of the Oireachtas, to all sectors of public service employment from 1 January 2013 onward are members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme. This is a defined benefit scheme which operates under rules set out in the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012 with pension accrual based on career-average pay, not final salary, and a higher pension qualifying age in line with reforms in broader pension policy. I am satisfied that the Single Scheme provides fair and reasonable pension terms to its members and ensures that they will have adequate pension provision for the period after their employment.

Public Sector Reform Implementation

44. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will report on performance budgeting and performance management in the public service; his plans for key elements of development and reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19719/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The performance budgeting initiative provides a single, coherent organising principle for public service information funded by the Exchequer. Over the last number of years, the initiative has been subject to ongoing review and improvement. One of the most significant developments in this area has been the reformatting of the Revised Estimates Volume to include performance information. This new design ensures that the information needed by decision-makers and those who scrutinise public policy is available ‘at a glance’. This includes details of financial and human resources, outputs and public service activities, and context and impact indicators. This allows for examination of how public money is being spent, the services that are being provided and the impact that those services are having on our society.

The development of the performance budgeting initiative is an ongoing process, to enhance the information provided and build on international best practice and guidance. Following the publication of the Revised Estimates Volume for 2016, a detailed review of the performance information provided was carried out by my Department. Alongside this, a detailed guidance note on enhancing the quality of performance information has been developed and circulated to Departments. In line with this guidance note and based on the results of the review, detailed feedback has been provided to each of the main Government Departments, in order to assist officials in selecting and reporting on appropriate performance indicators. This feedback has been positively received and it is anticipated that, with ongoing engagement on the matter, there will be a significant improvement in the quality of performance information included in future publications.

In order to facilitate the Oireachtas in their *ex-post* scrutiny of budgetary measures and consistent with the recommendations of the November 2015 OECD Report *Review of budget oversight by parliament: Ireland*, I have proposed to submit a performance report to the Oireachtas by the end of Quarter 1 each year, starting in 2017. This report will provide information on the performance of each Vote and the linkages between results and allocated resources. It is intended that this will allow for meaningful and systematic engagement between the Oireachtas and Government Departments on resource allocation decisions and the impacts of public policies.

Public Sector Pensions Levy

45. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the timeline for reversing the public service pension reductions introduced during the economic crisis; the cost of restoring cuts on pensions up to €50,000 and full restoration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19746/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In June 2015, Government approved proposals for a significant amelioration of pension reductions which had been applied under the financial emergency (FEMPI) legislation to all public service pensions above specified thresholds. This amelioration of the Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR), which subsequently became law under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2015, provides for changes to occur in three phases, on 1 January 2016, 1 January 2017 and 1 January 2018.

On 1 January 2016, increases in the exemption thresholds for PSPR application were activated. These exemption threshold increases fully removed PSPR from a significant number of pensions with relatively lower values, while those pensions which continue to be impacted by PSPR received a boost of €400 per year.

On 1 January 2017, additional PSPR amelioration, acting principally via further exemption

threshold increases, will fully remove PSPR from another significant tranche of public service pensioners, while at the same time boosting those pensions which remain affected by PSPR by €500 per year.

On 1 January 2018, the third phase of PSPR amelioration will ensure that all PSPR-impacted pensions with values up to €34,132 will be fully restored, meaning that PSPR will no longer affect such pensions, while those pensions which continue to be impacted by PSPR will get a boost of, in most cases, €780 per year.

These phased PSPR changes across the public service will cost an estimated €90 million on an annual basis and, when fully implemented, will ensure that only the top 20% higher value public service pensions will continue to be impacted by the PSPR.

The cost of amending PSPR as currently applied by increasing the threshold before PSPR is applied to €50,000 is estimated to incur a further cost of €90 million per year. The PSPR yield in this scenario would be reduced to less than €15 million per year.

The costs of fully restoring the PSPR cuts as currently applied is estimated to be in the region of €105 million per year.

Public Sector Staff Data

46. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide information on the number of persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds currently working in his Department and in other public service organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter [19562/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department does not collect data pertaining to the ethnic and cultural background of staff. However, the Civil Service is strongly committed to equality of opportunity in all its employment practices. As an employer, the Civil Service must fulfil its obligations under equality legislation, particularly the Employment Equality Act 1998. While recognising that people are different, our employment practices ensure that these differences do not lead to unlawful discrimination in the workplace.

As an employer, my Department strives to achieve real equality of opportunity by continuously monitoring its employment practices to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation.

Public Procurement Regulations

47. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the impact the establishment of the national procurement guidelines has had on job retention; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19559/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Office of Government Procurement (OGP) was established as one of the key elements of the Public Sector Reform programme. The primary aim is achieve value for money by harnessing the State's buying power to purchase goods and services for the public sector in a manner that enables the provision of quality public services to be maintained within limited resources.

The State spends approximately €12 billion per annum on goods, services and works. This level of expenditure affords significant business opportunities for firms. The procurement re-

form is being carried out in a manner that recognises the clear importance of small and medium-sized enterprises to the country's economic recovery. European and National rules ensure that procurement processes must be transparent and equitable in the treatment of all suppliers. The OGP has estimated that approximately 93% of this annual procurement spend goes to Irish suppliers which illustrates that public procurement activity is a significant enabler of employment and economic activity within the State.

The recently transposed EU rules on Public Procurement are designed to facilitate SMEs to tender for public sector procurement contracts. Measures specifically designed to improve access for SMEs and start-ups include:

- financial capacity criterion is less onerous; it is generally limited to twice contract value;
- use of a self-declaration (European Single Procurement Document) of compliance with selection and exclusion criteria by suppliers should reduce the cost of participation;
- the discretion to divide public contracts into lots, with the proviso that opting not to divide a contract into lots must be explained;
- provision for "consortia bidding" to encourage SME involvement.

A number of these measures were included in Circular 10/2014 issued by the OGP in advance of transposition; a measure broadly welcomed by SME representative bodies at the time.

The reform of public procurement across the public service is on-going and will continue to provide opportunities to the SME sector to win business. The OGP will continue to work with industry and state agencies to ensure that winning government business is done in a fair, transparent and accessible way and to ensure that government procurement policies are business friendly.

Ombudsman's Remit

48. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he is aware of remarks by the Ombudsman seeking greater power to investigate complaints against private sector providers of public services and public service providers not currently covered within his remit; his plans to expand the remit of the Ombudsman; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19748/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am aware of the Ombudsman's view that, generally speaking, his Office should have remit over private sector providers of public services.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Ombudsman (Amendment) Act 2012 greatly extended the remit of the Ombudsman with some 180 additional public bodies coming under his remit. The Ombudsman legislation provides that the Ombudsman may examine administrative actions taken by or on behalf of bodies within his remit. This means, for instance, that bodies such as Section 38 bodies which are provided with funding to deliver services for and on behalf of the Health Service Executive and Section 39 bodies which are provided with funding to assist them to provide health and social care services, can have their actions examined by the Ombudsman.

Furthermore, under the 2012 Act, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform has the power to make an order bringing a body under the Ombudsman's remit if it is financed, wholly or partly, or directly or indirectly by means of monies provided by a Minister of the Govern-

ment. This enabled the bringing in of over four hundred and thirty private nursing homes under the Ombudsman's remit with effect from 24 August 2015 under the terms of SI 300 of 2015.

My Department engages regularly with the Office of the Ombudsman and issues such as the extent of its remit are kept under frequent review.

Question No. 49 answered with Question No. 31.

Cross-Border Co-operation

50. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the way in which he envisions co-operation in the public service will proceed on a cross-Border basis in view of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19557/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Public service reform was a key element of the response to the challenges we faced in recent years and continues to be an essential part of building for the future. In this context, we have been cooperating on with our colleagues in Northern Ireland for a number of years, particularly since the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was established in 2011.

We have developed a good relationship on reform issues through an ongoing programme of engagement between my Department and the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland. This includes regular visits and bilateral discussions on a range of issues of mutual interest. For example, recent meetings have focused on Civil Service Renewal, digital government, alternative models of service delivery and shared services. Both Departments face similar challenges around budget constraints, demographics, quality of services and customer expectations, and this engagement provides good opportunities to share learning and best practice on Public Service Reform.

This collaborative relationship has been fruitful and I believe it is very important that this cooperation continues into the future, regardless of the outcome of the recent referendum on UK membership of the EU. Nevertheless, I will be considering all opportunities for enhanced cross-border cooperation in the context of Brexit.

Questions Nos. 51 and 52 answered with Question No. 31.

Question No. 53 answered with Question No. 24.

Flood Risk Management

54. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on establishing a single authority to deal with all matters relating to the River Shannon including flood relief measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19750/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney): The Government decided on 5 January 2016 to establish the Shannon Flood State Agency Co-ordination Working Group to enhance on-going co-operation across all of the State Agencies involved with the River Shannon.

The Group is comprised of the following membership and comes under the chairmanship of the Office of Public Works: Office of Public Works; Local Authorities, represented by the City and County Management Association; Waterways Ireland; Electricity Supply Board; Inland

Fisheries Ireland; Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government; Bord na Móna; Environment Protection Agency; Irish Water.

The Attorney General's Office and other Government Departments may also participate, as requested by the Chairman.

The Group has met on three occasions to date and has conducted an audit of the roles and responsibilities of State Agency organisations and has published its Shannon Flood Risk Work Programme for 2016. This Work Programme which is available on the OPW website sets out co-ordinated actions and activities for the Shannon catchment. The Group has engaged in a programme of public consultation and has held a series of open days on its work programme. It is also considering in co-operation with the Attorney General's Office the development of appropriate guidance that will set out more clearly the rights and responsibilities of non-statutory bodies in relation to watercourses.

The Group is due to meet again on 12 July 2016 to, inter alia, consider the draft Shannon Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plan which will be published for public consultation shortly. The CFRAM is the core strategy for addressing flood risk in the Shannon Catchment. I intend to attend this meeting and to get an update from each of the state agencies on their actions and activities for the Shannon Catchment.

I am satisfied that the Shannon Flood State Agency Co-ordination Working Group is focussed on ensuring the best possible level of co-ordination between the statutory bodies on the River Shannon and that it will deliver the highest level of efficiencies to add value to the Shannon CFRAM programme.

Public Sector Reform Implementation

55. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a breakdown of the €2.2 billion savings per year due to the financial emergency measures in the public interest legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19809/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts 2009 to 2013 provide for a range of pay and pension reduction measures in respect of serving and retired public servants. The some €2.2bn in savings referred to is made up of €1.21bn in pay reductions, €0.9bn by the Pension Related Deduction (PRD) and €0.135bn by the Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR).

The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2015 has, with effect from 1 January 2016, commenced a phased and sustainable programme which ameliorates the impact of the measures implemented under the terms of the FEMPI Acts 2009-2013 through the implementation of the terms of the Lansdowne Road Agreement (LRA) and a significant restoration of public service pension reductions.

Flood Relief Schemes Expenditure

56. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his expenditure on flood relief plans in 2016 to date; how this compares with projected expenditure at the start of 2016; the amount of expenditure that will be needed in the next ten years to deal

with currently identified areas in danger of flooding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19749/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney): The core strategy for addressing the areas at significant risk and impact from flooding is the Office of Public Works' (OPW) Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. Good progress is being made on the CFRAM Programme, which is being undertaken by engineering consultants on behalf of the OPW working in partnership with the local authorities. The Programme involves the production of predictive flood mapping for each Area for Further Assessment (AFA), the development of preliminary flood risk management options and the production of flood risk management plans.

Good progress continues to be made this year also on the implementation of the CFRAM Programme. The Programme involves the production of predictive flood mapping for 300 areas of significant flood risk, the development of preliminary flood risk management options and the production of flood risk management plans for those areas.

The draft flood mapping is now being finalised following completion of the national statutory public consultation on 23rd December, 2015. Work on the development of preliminary options to address flood risk has been completed. Following finalisation of the mapping and the identification of flood risk management options, the final output from this important project will be integrated Flood Risk Management Plans containing specific viable measures to address in a comprehensive and sustainable way the significant flood risks identified. The draft Plans are scheduled to be made available for public consultation from mid-2016. Following the public consultation process the finalised Plans will include a prioritised list of measures, both structural and non-structural, to address flood risk in an environmentally sustainable and cost effective manner.

The OPW implements major flood relief schemes to protect our main towns and cities through its Flood Relief Capital Works Programme, carries out maintenance of those schemes and earlier, mainly agricultural schemes carried out under the Arterial Drainage Act 1945.

The total funding available to the Office of Public Works (OPW) for its overall flood risk management programme in 2016 is €80.746 million. This amount includes provision for expenditure on capital flood relief works, on arterial drainage maintenance activities, the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme, purchase of plant and machinery, hydrometric and hydrological investigation and monitoring and on the general administrative costs of operating the programme. Full details are provided in the Revised Estimates Volume 2016.

Of the total allocation of €80.746 million, an amount of €52.561 million has been provided in 2016 for expenditure on flood relief capital works. This amount provides for the preparation and design of flood relief schemes, the construction of flood relief works, the payment of compensation costs arising from these works and the carrying out of minor coastal or non-coastal works by Local Authorities with funding provided by the OPW under the Minor Works Scheme. It also provides for the carrying out of the CFRAM programme. The 2016 allocation includes a deferred surrender or capital carryover of €7m from the 2015 allocation. Expenditure on the flood relief programme in 2015 was less than budgeted for due primarily to delays in the planned commencement of construction of certain capital projects. The system of deferred surrender or capital carryover ensures that the funding is not lost to the flood capital investment programme.

Expenditure to date by the OPW in 2016 on its overall flood risk management programme is €23.223 million. Within this amount direct expenditure to date on the implementation of

flood relief schemes and the CFRAM Programme is €10m approximately. This is somewhat ahead of the amount profiled for this at the beginning of the year. Good progress is being made on the implementation of all the main elements of the programme and I am satisfied that, while not without some challenges, expenditure of the full allocation for the year remains on target.

In relation to the capital works element of the programme in particular, major schemes in Ennis, Waterford and the river Wad in Dublin will be completed this year. Works are continuing on the major schemes in Bray, on the River Dodder in Dublin and on the quays in Dublin. The Deputy will be pleased to hear also that works have now commenced on the River Clare scheme in Claregalway, contracts have been signed for the major schemes in Bandon and Skibbereen and the contractors are mobilising to commence construction of those works in the next few weeks. The schemes for Templemore, Foynes and Dunkellin are expected to commence construction in 2016 also. Another 21 schemes will continue to be advanced through design and planning stages.

Smaller scale flood relief works continue to be funded in 2016 through the OPW's Minor Works scheme which puts local authorities in funds to carry out more localised flood mitigation measures. Expenditure of €2.5 - €3.0 million is anticipated on this scheme in 2016. Approximately 30 projects have been approved for funding to date in 2016 which brings the total number approved since 2009 when the scheme was introduced to 544 with total expenditure of €30m. approximately.

In the important area of maintenance, each year the OPW carries out work to approximately 2,000km of channels and some 200 structures around the country as part of its ongoing and rolling arterial drainage maintenance programme. €15.3 million is allocated to the maintenance programme nationally in 2016 and this programme and funding is fully committed for 2016. Expenditure to date in 2016 on the maintenance programme is €7.1 million which is in line with profiled expenditure. The timing of work on individual projects is determined having regard to the needs of regular maintenance and the prioritisation of urgent jobs.

Increased levels of investment in the area of flood relief will be required and are being provided for as part of the overall Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021 and this investment programme will allow for consideration and implementation of measures arising from the CFRAM Flood Risk Management Plans. This Partnership Government is demonstrating its support of flood relief by committing to the €430m for Flood Risk Management (FRM) included within the 2016-2021 Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan. Under the Plan expenditure on flood risk measures is planned to increase from its current level of €45m per annum to €100m per annum by 2021.

Foireann Roinne

57. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe cén líon státseirbhíseach atá earcaithe le bliain anuas in a Roinn a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu; cén grád ar ar earcaíodh iad; cén líon iomlán státseirbhíseach a earcaíodh i rith an ama sin agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [19554/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Le 12 mhí anuas fostaíodh 245 státseirbhíseach don Roinn. Bhí formhór na fostaíthe seo don Oifig Náisiúnta Seirbhísí Comhroinnte agus an Oifig um Sholáthar Rialtais. Oibríonn an Roinn liosta de baill foirne sa Roinn atá ábalta cabhrú le aistriúcháin Gaeilge agus sna 12 mhí anuas bhí 3 ball foirne nua curtha leis an liosta seo (2 Oifigeach Riaracháin agus 1 Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin). Beidh a fhios ag an Teachta nach mbíonn an-chuid teangmháil ag foireann mo Roinn le baill den phobal.

Flood Relief Schemes Expenditure

58. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 16 of 1 October 2015, the details of increases in investment by his Department in flood mitigation works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19729/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): A provision of €430 million funding for flood risk management was announced in the *Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021* published in September 2015.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020
Flood Risk Management	45	45	70	80	90	100

This funding is provided to the Office of Public Works (OPW) through the annual Estimates process and allows for a graduated increase in the annual capital allocation to the OPW for flood relief measures from its existing base of €45m to €100m by 2021. The €430 million allocation will enable the OPW to continue with the implementation of its existing programme of flood relief capital works and to commence implementation on a prioritised basis from 2017 onwards of the structural flood defence measures that will be included in the flood risk management plans being prepared under the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme including any viable measures identified to address flooding in the coastal locations included in the Programme. These plans are due to be finalised by end 2016.

The CFRAM Programme is the core strategy for addressing flood risk in areas at potentially significant risk from flooding and is the means for implementing the EU Floods Directive and national flood policy. The Programme is focussing on 300 Areas for Further Assessment (AFAs) including 90 coastal areas, mainly in urban locations nationwide, identified as being at potentially significant risk of flooding.

Pending the completion of the CFRAM Plans, OPW is continuing with the implementation of its existing comprehensive programme of flood relief Capital Works which includes projects at various stages of design, planning and construction. There are currently seven major schemes at construction in Bray, Co Wicklow, River Dodder, Dublin, South Campshires, Dublin, Ennis Lower, Ennis, Phases 2, 3 and 4 in Waterford City and construction is just underway in Bandon and Skibbereen. There are a further 26 at design and planning stage and it is expected that construction will commence on schemes in Claregalway, Templemore, Dunkellin river and Foyes in 2016.

OPW will also continue its Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, which allows local authorities to submit applications for funding to OPW for projects costing under €0.5m and which meet required criteria. €29m has been provided to date for 500 projects under the scheme.

Commencement of Legislation

59. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when he will implement the remaining sections of the Lobbying Act 2015; his plans to give the Standards in Public Office Commission authority to investigate and to prosecute cases where lobbying legislation is not complied with and to levy fines for breaches; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [19745/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Currently, part 4 of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015, which relates to enforcement provisions, has not been commenced. This was a deliberate decision made to allay any concerns that stakeholders may have had about inadvertent non-compliance with the provisions of the Act and to allow those lobbying a period of time to become familiar with their legal obligations and the registration system.

When the Bill was being considered in the Oireachtas, it was outlined that the enforcement provisions would not be put in place until after the first review of the Act was completed. The review will kick off in September and is expected to be completed in Q1 2017.

Given how well the first two registration periods went, and following consultation with the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPOC), it is proposed that SIPOC should work towards a commencement date for the enforcement provisions of 1 January 2017. This allows additional time for the Act to bed down and for persons lobbying to put in place their own systems for recording and reporting their lobbying activities. It also ensures that the legislative review will be largely complete before commencement of the enforcement provisions.

It is my intention to sign the Commencement Order shortly giving effect to the enforcement provisions from 1 January 2017.

Infrastructure and Capital Investment Programme

60. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which he has identified possible mechanisms to facilitate off-balance sheet capital expenditure in respect of strategic infrastructural deficits in such areas as energy, housing, water supply, transport or other essential requirements, given the economic benefits likely to accrue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19715/16]

186. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which his Department has identified infrastructural deficiencies requiring urgent investment in the context of economic recovery such as the public housing programme, transport, energy and communications which might benefit from or qualify for off-balance sheet Government expenditure or investment; if a mechanism can be found to meet such requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20041/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 60 and 186 together.

As the Deputy is aware, a strategic review of infrastructural requirements was undertaken by my Department as part of last year's capital review. This resulted in the publication in September 2015 of 'Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021', which outlined a €42bn framework for infrastructural investment across Ireland. The Plan prioritises spending on what were considered to be the areas of greatest need as the economy continues its strong recovery.

As always, to support traditional procurement, alternative means of funding continue to be explored by my Department, which includes 'off-balance sheet' methods allowed for under the fiscal rules. To support the planned Exchequer capital investment and €14.5bn commercial State sector investment elements of the Capital Plan, a new third phase of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) to a value of €500m was announced as part of the Capital Plan. This

off-balance sheet investment via PPP was specifically targeted at addressing priority needs in three areas - education, health and justice - while Phase 2 of the PPP programme announced in Budget 2015 is targeting social housing. Phase 1 of the PPP programme, announced in 2012, is addressing infrastructural needs in the areas of education, health, justice and transport.

The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to a review of Government priorities within the Capital Plan in the context of the mid term review to be undertaken in early 2017. The programme also provides for the Government to propose that the Oireachtas approve a cumulative, additional €4 billion in exchequer capital investment up to 2021, targeted in particular at the areas of transport, broadband, education, health and flood defences, to accelerate delivery of infrastructure requirements. The Summer Economic Statement provided for a further additional €1 billion capital investment, over and above the €4 billion already signalled in the Programme for a Partnership Government, thus bringing the planned total extra spending on capital investment to €5 billion over the period of the plan.

In undertaking the mid-term review of the Capital Plan in 2017, my Department will continue to consider the potential for alternative financing mechanisms to supplement direct exchequer investment in infrastructure, including off-balance sheet models.

Public Procurement Contracts

61. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his approach to companies receiving large public procurement contracts and yet not recognising trade unions when industrial issues arise. [19807/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Public procurement is governed by EU and National rules. The EU Treaty principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination, transparency, mutual recognition, proportionality, free movement of goods and services and the right of establishment must be observed on all tenders.

EU rules require tenderers to be compliant with relevant labour law in order to participate in a public procurement process. The Directive makes it clear that non-compliance with the relevant obligations may lead to exclusion of a tenderer from the procedure for the awarding of a public contract. This Directive was transposed into Irish law in May of this year.

The obligations in relation to labour law are reflected in the standard tender and contract documents developed by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) in conjunction with the Chief State Solicitor's Office.

In the case of the goods and services, Schedule A of the template contract obliges contractors to comply with all applicable laws that apply at the place where the good/services are provided, that have been established by EU law, national law, collective agreements and by international, environmental, social and labour law listed in Annex X of Directive 2014/24/EU. In the case of works, Clause 5.3 of the Public Works Contracts requires contractors to respect the right under law of workers to be members of trade unions and provides access for trade union officials having concerns in relation to a contractor's or contractors' personnel's compliance with an agreement to a designated member of the contractor's management. A main contractor is required to provide a Certificate of Compliance with Clause 5.3 with each payment claim submitted (normally on a monthly basis). Failure to provide this compliance certificate will result in payment not being made by the contracting authority. The ultimate sanction if a main contractor continues to be non-compliant is for the main contract to be terminated. The management of the tendering process is a matter for each contracting authority.

Finally, I would point out that enforcement of employment law is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) has responsibility for inspection of compliance in this area.

Equal Opportunities Employment

62. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the good practices that have been introduced to encourage employment of the members of new Irish communities in the Civil Service or local government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19561/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The civil and public service is an equal opportunities employer and all recruitment campaigns are conducted in strict compliance with the Codes of Practice set out by the Commission for Public Service Appointments.

As the deputy will be aware, the Civil Service is strongly committed to equality of opportunity in all its employment practices. As an employer, the Civil Service must fulfil its obligations under equality legislation, particularly the Employment Equality Act 1998. While recognising that people are different, employment practices must ensure that these differences do not lead to unlawful discrimination in the workplace.

The Civil Service Diversity Policy was launched in 2002 and reviewed in 2006. Together with the Civil Service Gender Equality Policy, these policies were designed to ensure that the Civil Service put equality at the centre of its approach to human resource management.

There is a considerable body of legislation and case law dealing with equality in the workplace. In common with all employers, the Civil Service is responsible in law for upholding equality legislation. The Diversity Policy aims to ensure that all civil servants and their customers, both internal and external, can be confident that no one will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, race, religion, disability, or membership of the Traveller community and throughout their working lives, Civil Servants can be assured of equality of participation in their Department, regardless of gender, marital or family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community.

As an employer, the Civil Service strives to achieve real equality of opportunity by continuously monitoring its employment practices to ensure that they do not perpetuate existing inequalities.

Responsibility for the implementation of equality of opportunity lies with the Head of each Department.

Teachers' Remuneration

63. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide an update on his engagement with the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland regarding the renewal of financial emergency measures in the public interest, FEMPI, legislation; the way he will seek to minimise the effects of legislation on pay and work conditions into the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19560/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Under section

12 of the FEMPI 2013 Act, I am obliged to review and report to the Houses of the Oireachtas on the operation, effectiveness and impact of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Acts 2009-2013 and consider whether or not any of the provisions of the relevant Acts continue to be necessary having regard to the purposes of those Acts, the revenues of the State and State commitments in respect of public service pay and pensions.

The report on the review undertaken was laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas on 29 June in accordance with the provisions of the Act. Among the considerations which informed the determination by me of the necessity for the continuing application of the measures provided for under the Acts were: the instability in the international economy (including risks posed by Brexit), the still fragile nature of our economic recovery, the need to protect hard won competitiveness gains, the high level of debt, the continuing fiscal deficit, the obligation to comply with the Stability and Growth Pact, and the need to balance competing demands within the available fiscal space.

A meeting was held at the end of last year between senior representatives of the ASTI and officials of my Department, during which the ASTI representatives were provided with a comprehensive appraisal of the FEMPI legislation and the implications of its statutory implementation. Given the statutory context of the review, it was not appropriate for the Minister to meet directly with any body representing persons affected in the completion of this review.

The terms of the Lansdowne Road Agreement (LRA) reducing the impact of the pay reductions are being implemented through the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2015 over the three years to 2018 at a full final year cost of €844m. Additional provisions provide for a similar programme of reductions in the impact of the Public Service Pension Reduction at a full-year cost of €90m in 2018.

Public Sector Pensions

64. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will extend full and equal pension rights to public sector workers who identify as LGBTI and allow them to upgrade their pensions to spouse and children pensions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19753/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My role as Minister in the field of pensions relates to issues affecting the civil and public service. The civil service operates Contributory Pension Schemes which provide benefits to spouses and/or children of deceased scheme members. In summary, when a member dies after retirement, a spouse's pension of up to one-half of the former member's pension is payable. Dependent children are also entitled to a child's pension.

Same sex married couples are afforded the same benefits under the Civil Service Schemes and the Single Public Service Pension Scheme as married couples of the opposite sex. The Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010 extended the benefits provided to spouses under pension schemes to civil partners and the Marriage Act 2015 gives effect to the referendum on marriage equality.

Ministerial Responsibilities

65. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the allocation of ministerial powers at both Cabinet and Minister of State level; if all

ministerial powers have been transferred to reflect the reorganised ministerial portfolios; if not, the powers which have not been transferred and the reason there has been a delay; when they will be transferred; and the delegated powers of each of the Ministers of State. [19810/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In accordance with the Transfer of Functions Guidelines, my Department has responsibility for co-ordination of transfers of Departmental administration and Ministerial functions. Following the reorganisation of Government Departments announced by the Taoiseach on the 6th of May, functions were to be transferred between the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and between the Department of the Environment and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

Functions relating to Rural Affairs have already been transferred from the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht under the Rural Affairs and Social Enterprise (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order 2016 which will come into effect on 9 July 2016. These include functions relating to the LEADER programme, the Rural Development Fund, the CLÁR programme, Rural Recreation, Rural Economic Development Zones, Tidy Towns, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Walks Scheme, Social Enterprise and the Western Development Commission.

There is a much larger number of functions to be transferred from the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources involving a significant amount of legislation. The legal complexity associated with the drafting of this Transfer of Functions Order means that there is a considerable time requirement associated with it. Drafting of the Order is nearing completion and it is expected to be brought to Government in the next number of weeks. The entire Environment and Waste Management Programme and the Environment Fund are transferring to the Minister for Communications. This includes seven programme areas, which are:

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Carbon Fund
- International Climate Change Commitments
- Landfill Remediation
- Technical Research and Modelling (Climate Change)
- Subscriptions to International Organisations
- The Environment Fund

The delegation of powers for Ministers of State is not centrally coordinated by my Department and is a matter for the individual Departments in question.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

66. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the sections of staff that have been assigned or transferred between Departments as a consequence of changes to ministerial or departmental structure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19811/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Arising from the Taoiseach's decision to restructure Departments of State to better align them with the priority objectives of the new Government, a number of functions that are currently vested in the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government transferred to the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. This will facilitate the establishment of the new Department of Regional Development, Rural Affairs, Arts and the Gaeltacht.

While responsibility for the Community Affairs brief continues to be vested in the new Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, responsibility for programmes relating to the rural affairs function will now transfer to the Minister for Regional Development, Rural Affairs, Arts and the Gaeltacht.

The programmes and work items transferred include the LEADER Programme, the CLÁR Programme, Rural Recreation, the National Countryside Recreation Strategy, the Walks Scheme, the Rural Development Fund, Social Enterprise, Tidy Towns, Rural Economic Development Zones, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Western Development Commission, Dormant Accounts and functions relating to Social Enterprise.

Regarding the numbers that have transferred, 40 staff have transferred in from the Community Division of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.

Further business areas relating to the Environment and Climate Actions will transfer to the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when the Transfer of Functions Order is complete.

Two members of staff have also already transferred to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht from the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, one from the Post Office Network section, and one from the Rural Broadband section.

Appointments to State Boards

67. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Taoiseach the number of appointments he has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short-list; the date when the short-list was provided to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20073/16]

The Taoiseach: I make appointments to the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) and the National Statistics Board (NSB) in accordance with the National Economic and Social Development Office Act 2006, S.I. No. 603 of 2010 - National Economic and Social Council (Alteration of Composition) Order 2010; and Section 18 of the Statistics Act 1993.

Since November 2014 I have made one appointment to the NESC and no appointments to the NSB. Ms. Patricia King, General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, was appointed to the NESC in March 2015 following nomination by ICTU.

Foireann Roinne

68. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Taoiseach cén líon státseirbhíseach atá earcaithe le bliain anuas in a Roinn a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu; cén grád ar a earcaíodh iad; cén líon iomlán státseirbhíseach a earcaíodh i rith an ama sin agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [20449/16]

The Taoiseach: Idir an 1 Meitheamh 2015 agus an 31 Bealtaine 2016, earcaíodh 16 ball foirne i mo Roinnse. Seo a leanas briseadh síos na ngrád:

6 Oifigeach Riaracháin;

1 Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin;

7 Oifigeach Cléireachais; agus

2 bhall foirne Seirbhísí.

Tá caighdeán Gaeilge na hArdteistiméireachta ag 13 den 16 ball foirne a earcaíodh. Tá 1 duine amháin de na baill foirne sin ainmnithe mar oifigeach a labhróidh Gaeilge chun críocha seirbhísí do chustaiméirí.

Ba cheart a thabhairt ar aird gurb é an phríomhsprioc a bhaineann le hobair mo Roinnese ná déileáil leis an Rialtas agus le Ranna Rialtais is le hÁisíneachtaí Rialtais eile. Mar thoradh air sin, ní bhíonn mórán éilimh ón bpobal ar ár gcuid seirbhísí i nGaeilge.

Legislative Programme

69. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to reintroduce the Gambling Control Bill 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19883/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The General Scheme of the Gambling Control Bill was published in July 2013 following approval by the Government and is currently in drafting by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel. The Bill, as proposed, will update all existing laws on the regulation of gambling, including betting and gaming but excluding the National Lottery. It will provide for the licensing of all forms of on-line gambling. The Gambling Control Bill will, as set out in the General Scheme, confer responsibility for all regulatory matters on the Minister for Justice and Equality. The Minister’s functions will include licensing, inspections and prosecutions, and it is envisaged that these functions will be carried out by a body located within my Department. The General Scheme also provides for a dedicated inspectorate to ensure compliance by licence holders with the terms of their licences and with the new legislation generally. The proposed legislation will have consumer protection generally as one of its core principles, and it is envisaged that it will include several measures aimed at the protection of vulnerable persons, including children, from risks to their well-being arising from gambling. In particular, the Scheme of the Bill envisages the establishment of a Fund to promote socially responsible gambling and to assist in counteracting the ill-effects of irresponsible gambling. The purposes of the Fund may also include public education and awareness programmes, research and treatment programmes. It would remain the intention to proceed with this legislation at the earliest feasible opportunity and, in that light, I expect that this will be given renewed consideration in the preparation of the next legislation programme. At the same time, and pending the bringing forward of the main Bill, I have also asked my Department to examine whether there are any individual pressing areas of concern, intended to be dealt with in the Bill, which could be dealt with sooner by separate legislative measures.

Garda Vetting Applications

70. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the

reason for the delay on an application for entry to the Defence Forces by a person (details supplied) which has been with the Garda vetting unit for in excess of seven months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19987/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Garda Authorities that a vetting application in respect of the person to whom the Deputy refers was received on 14 September 2015. The application was processed and returned to the Authorised Signatory in the relevant organisation on 30 September 2015. In the circumstances the applicant is advised to contact the registered organisation to ascertain the current position.

Garda Vetting Applications

71. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the average processing time for vetting applications for entry to the Defence Forces by the Garda vetting unit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19988/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the current average processing time for vetting applications is four weeks. However, in some individual cases additional enquiries may be necessary, which may involve seeking information from abroad, and this may result in processing times in excess of the average.

The primary purpose of the Garda employment vetting service is to seek to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults. Accordingly, the vetting process demands rigorous procedures to safeguard its integrity and to maintain the highest level of confidence by the public and organisations availing of the service. Any vetting process will take a certain minimum amount of time to complete and, taking into account the importance of measures to protect children and vulnerable adults while providing an effective and efficient service, the current processing period is not unreasonable.

The Deputy may also wish to know that An Garda Síochána launched an ‘e-vetting’ system on 29 April 2016 which will facilitate the processing of applications in an on-line format, thus removing the current time-consuming process of manual applications. E-vetting will further streamline the vetting process and contribute to sustaining reduced processing times for vetting applications. The e-vetting system is designed to be compatible with the requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 and, in this regard, was launched in tandem with the commencement of the Acts.

Garda Promotions

72. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of vacancies which exist within An Garda Síochána for positions of superintendent or higher ranking, by rank; when she will fill these positions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19993/16]

Tánaiste and 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 keep 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.

The agreed strength for the rank of Superintendent and above as approved by my Department in conjunction with the Department of Public Expenditure is as outlined in the following table, together with actual strength as of the end of May 2016.

It is my intention to bring proposals to Government shortly in relation to the filling of vacancies in the superintendent and chief superintendent ranks. It is of course an operational matter for the Garda Commissioner to decide how to allocate and deploy these resources.

31 May 2016

Rank	Actual strength	Approved max. strength
Commissioner	1	1
D/Commissioner	2	2
A/Commissioner	8	8
C/Superintendent	36	45
Superintendent	157	166

Direct Provision Data

73. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in direct provision, by men, by women, by children, by length of time in direct provision, by average waiting time in having an application for asylum finalised, by centre and by county; the overall cost of maintaining direct provision centres; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19995/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As at 26 June, 2016 there were 4,284 persons residing in accommodation provided by the Reception & Integration Agency (RIA). The latest published detailed monthly statistics are for 31 May 2016 which show that there were 4,499 persons residing in Direct Provision accommodation of which 1,177 were under the age of 18.

While centre by centre details on age and gender are not compiled for the monthly reports, the overall total of 4,499 persons comprise of 1,203 adult females, 2,119 adult males, 565 minor females and 612 minor males.

The vast majority of residents in the Direct Provision system who are awaiting a protection decision are in the system for less than three years. This is a marked change from when the matter was considered by the Working Group on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision which reported on the matter just over a year ago. In that regard, significant progress has been made in the processing of caseloads by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of those longest in the system and this is reflected in both the reduction in the length of time persons are in the system and the overall reducing numbers in Direct Provision accommodation.

In respect of duration of stay in the Direct Provision system, it should be noted that RIA provides accommodation supports for persons who have been granted a protection status and are in the process of transitioning out of the system. It also provides accommodation for failed protection applicants who are the subject of a Deportation Order and who are legally obliged to remove themselves from the State.

The median processing time in respect of asylum decisions taken during the period 1 Janu-

ary 2016 to 30 April 2016 for those in Direct Provision accommodation was 25 months approximately, a reduction of over 3 months on the corresponding period in 2015.

In 2015, the total amount paid for direct provision accommodation was €53.143m. As the Reception and Integration Agency is currently engaged in a tendering process for the provision of services at the seven State owned accommodation centres, it is not considered prudent to provide any further breakdown of the total figure provided at this time. Furthermore while the number of persons accommodated can appear relatively static at times, it masks considerable daily and weekly fluctuations in numbers arriving and leaving.

Further statistics on those in RIA accommodation including centre-by-centre statistics can be found in the Monthly and Annual Reports on the Agency's website www.ria.gov.ie.

Garda Deployment

74. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she supports the request by Greystones municipal district for an immediate increase in Garda resources in Greystones, County Wicklow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20025/16]

77. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she supports the request by Wicklow Chamber of Commerce for an immediate increase in Garda resources in County Wicklow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20084/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 74 and 77 together.

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 keep 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.

Greystones forms part of the Bray District which is within the Wicklow Garda Division. I am informed that the distribution of Gardaí throughout the Division on the 31 May 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was as set out in the following table.

As the Deputy will be aware, when the financial crisis hit, the Government of the time introduced a moratorium on recruitment and the four year National Recovery Plan, published in 2010, envisaged a steady reduction in Garda numbers. Thankfully, in a recovering economy, we were able to reopen the Garda College in September 2014, and a total of 851 Garda trainees have been recruited with a further 300 planned to be recruited during the remainder of this year. So far 463 of the new Garda trainees have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream uniform duties nationwide. Another 71 will attest tomorrow, 7 July, with 150 more to attest in November. Of these, 10 newly attested members have been assigned to the Wicklow Garda Division.

The Programme for Government, "A Programme for a Partnership Government" commits to continuing the ongoing accelerated Garda recruitment programme with a view to increasing Garda numbers to 15,000. Taking account of projected retirements, the current rate of recruitment will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark this year. We must, I believe, endeavour to make more rapid progress than this to reach our target of 15,000 and I am engaging with my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, in relation to increasing

the planned annual intake this year and in coming years.

WICKLOW GARDA DIVISION 31 May 2016

DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
	BALTINGLASS	34
	BLESSINGTON	22
	CARNEW	4
	DUNLAVIN	2
	SHILLELAGH	1
BALTINGLASS	TINAHELY	2
BALTINGLASS Total		65
	BRAY	116
	ENNISKERRY	3
	GREYSTONES	26
BRAY	NEWTOWNMOUNTKEN-NEDY	3
BRAY Total		148
	ARKLOW	33
	ASHFORD	9
	AUGHRIM	2
	AVOCA	2
	RATHDRUM	4
	ROUNDWOOD	3
WICKLOW	WICKLOW	43
WICKLOW Total		96
	WICKLOW DIVISION TOTAL	309

Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal Funding

75. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality when she will allocate the next budget for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal and the amount she will allocate for its awards; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20050/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can inform the Deputy that the 2017 estimates process is currently under way and the amount allocated will be a matter to be settled as part of that process.

Appointments to State Boards

76. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of appointments she has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short-list; the date when the short list was provided to her; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20070/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I regret

that it has not been possible to provide the information required in the time available. The information is currently being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is to hand.

Question No. 77 answered with Question No. 74.

EU Directives

78. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality when she will transpose the fourth European Union anti-money laundering directive 2015/849 into law. [20099/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The fourth EU Directive on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing was published on 20 May 2015 and provides that Member States shall transpose this Directive by 26 June 2017.

The full implementation of this Directive will involve the development of new policies, operational structures and practices and this process involves a range of Government Departments and other stake-holders in developing and bringing forward a number of legislative and non legislative measures. While other Departments are developing legislation relevant to their areas of responsibility, my Department has responsibility for bringing forward the necessary amendments to the relevant criminal justice legislation in this area and work on these aspects of the transposition are ongoing.

Public Sector Staff Data

79. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will provide information on the number of persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds currently working in her Department and in other public service organisations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20440/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am informed that my Department does not seek or retain the information sought by the Deputy as data on the ethnic and cultural background of staff is not considered to be relevant to their employment.

Foireann Roinne

80. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Tánaiste agus Aire Dlí agus Cirt agus Comhionannais cén líon státseirbhíseach atá earcaithe le bliain anuas in a Roinn a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu; cén grád ar ar earcaíodh iad; cén líon iomlán státseirbhíseach a earcaíodh i rith an ama sin agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [20448/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Rinne mo Roinn 256 ball foirne a cheapadh le 12 mhí anuas. Tá baill foirne a earcaíodh mar Oifigigh Chléireachais Shealadacha san áireamh sa líon sin, a bhformhór acu atá fostaithe ar bhonn conartha ar théarma seasta chun folúntais shealadacha agus riachtanais foirnithe ghearrthearma, a tháinig chun cinn ar fud na Roinne, a chlúdach. Níl an t-eolas atá iarrtha ag an Teachta maidir leis an líon foirne a earcaíodh le bliain anuas a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla araon acu ar fáil. Mar is eol don Teachta, déantar baill foirne le haghaidh mo Roinne a earcú tríd an tSeirbhís um

Cheapacháin Phoiblí (*PAS*).

Tá áthas orm a chur in iúl don Teachta, áfach, go bhfuil cohórt de bhreis is 40 oifigeach ag mo Roinn, arna tharraingt as na hacmhainní reatha, atá ar fáil chun seirbhísí a sholáthar (is é sin, ceisteanna agus fiosruithe a fhreagairt) as Gaeilge. Ó 2006 i leith, le tosach feidhme a Scéime Tionscnaimh Gaeilge, tá an Roinn Dlí agus Cirt agus Comhionannais tar éis 23 cúrsa inmheánach Gaeilge a reáchtáil, idir chúrsaí scríofa agus chúrsaí labhartha, arna gcur in oiriúint do bhaill foirne. Is iad Gaeleagras, Gaelchultúr agus an Foras Riaracháin a reáchtáil na cúrsaí seo, i gcomhthráth le chéile, i roinnt cásanna. Ina theannta sin, tá an Roinn tar éis tacú le baill foirne ar mhian leo cúrsaí Gaeilge a dhéanamh lasmuigh den Roinn, agus le hoifigigh a ghlac páirt i gcúrsa scríofa Gaeilge ar-líne, agus tá sí ag tacú i gcónaí le baill foirne ar mian leo cúrsaí Gaeilge a dhéanamh. Chuaigh oifigeach amháin de chuid na Roinne ar aghaidh chun Céim Mháistreacht sa Ghaeilge a dhéanamh, agus chuaigh oifigeach eile, a bhí tar éis freastal ar roinnt cúrsaí inmheánacha, ar aghaidh chun Céim B.A. sa Ghaeilge a dhéanamh.

Le linn Sheachtain na Gaeilge gach bliain, le roinnt blianta anuas, reáchtáil an Roinn imeacht chun úsáid na Gaeilge laistigh den Roinn a chothú, agus bhí freastal fiormhaith ar gach ceann de na himeachtaí sin.

Economic Growth

81. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which all sectors have contributed to economic recovery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20035/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am greatly encouraged by the latest data showing that the economic recovery is now firmly established with growth of 7.8 per cent recorded in 2015, the fastest rate in Europe.

Importantly, the expansion in economic activity, initially led by the exporting sectors, is now more broadly based with growth now increasingly driven by domestic factors. Domestic demand made a strong positive contribution to growth in 2015 with consumer spending increasing by 3.5 per cent and investment, boosted by intellectual property assets, up by 28 per cent. Domestic demand looks set to make a strong contribution once more this year.

Domestic demand is supported by the continuing broad based recovery of the labour market. Employment grew by 2.4 per cent over the year to the first quarter of 2016, equivalent to an increase of almost 47,000 jobs with gains recorded in 12 of the 14 sectors reported by the CSO. The unemployment rate remained unchanged in June at 7.8 per cent, seasonally adjusted, down from 9.4 per cent per cent a year earlier. This is still the lowest rate of unemployment since December 2008.

The volume of retail sales increased by 8.1 per cent year-on-year in May 2016. Core sales (excluding motor trades) were up by 6.5 per cent over the same period. New cars licensed for the first time were up almost 25 per cent to end-May year-on-year. Expansion in the construction sector continued in May with the Purchasing Managers' Index for the sector recording its thirty-third successive month of expansion.

Meanwhile, the external sector remains strong with exports increasing by 13.8 per cent in 2015. While this was mainly driven by the modern sectors, it is important to note that the more traditional, labour intensive, sectors have also shown strong growth. However, recent data indicates there has been a slowdown in merchandise trade with annual growth of 2.2 per cent recorded to end April compared with growth of over 20 per cent in 2015.

As well as monitoring the overall performance of the economy, my Department also monitors individual sectors continuously. Government policy will continue to monitor for, and to guard against, the build-up of sectoral imbalances and to avoid over-dependence on a single sector, as was previously the case with Ireland's construction sector.

While growth remains strong, we need to be cognisant of the impact of the recent UK vote to leave the EU. We know that this decision will have an adverse impact on the growth outlook. Our initial estimate, based on the assessment in the Summer Economic Statement, is that growth in 2017 will be 0.5% lower than previously expected.

The Department of Finance will prepare a full macroeconomic projection in advance of Budget 2017 in October and this will include updated estimates of economic growth and the public finances, taking account of developments up to that time, including the UK decision.

UK Referendum on EU Membership

82. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Finance if he has considered the Economic and Social Research Institute's HERMES suggestion that a 1% reduction in the United Kingdom gross domestic product arising from its exit from the European Union will reduce Irish gross domestic product by approximately 0.2% over two years; and if he supports the estimates provided by the United Kingdom Treasury and United Kingdom NIESR. [20105/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In advance of the UK referendum, my Department conducted a risk analysis of the possible economic impacts on Ireland from a UK exit, the results of which were published in Box 2 of the Summer Economic Statement. The analysis used the ESRI HERMES macroeconomic model to estimate the impacts on Ireland, based on a range of scenarios for the UK. The HERMES model has been used for over 25 years to carry out medium-term forecasting and scenario analysis of the Irish economy and is routinely utilised by the Department of Finance for policy and risk analysis.

In relation to the figure that a 1 per cent reduction in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the United Kingdom would reduce Irish GDP by 0.2 per cent over a two year horizon, this represents the impact of a generic permanent fall in UK GDP. This figure should thus be taken as a general rule of thumb, based on historical relationships, for translating the impact of GDP changes in the UK on Ireland.

The estimates produced by HM Treasury and the UK National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) represent a broad range of potential scenarios and suggest a reduction of UK GDP of 2.3 to 6.0 per cent over two years relative to a vote to remain. These numbers are estimates for an outcome of an event which at this point is characterised by a large number of uncertainties. However, based on the historical relationships between the UK and Irish economy, these estimates would imply a fall in Irish GDP, relative to a remain outcome, in the range of 0.5 to 1.2 per cent over two years.

IMF Loan

83. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance why Ireland repaid only 81% of its International Monetary Fund loan earlier and the potential saving in repaying the remaining loan earlier than scheduled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19882/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Ireland received SDR[1] 19.5 billion,

circa €22.5 billion, from the IMF Extended Fund Facility as part of the three-year external financial support programme.

The NTMA completed the third early repayment of Ireland's IMF loan facility on the 20 March 2015, bringing the total amount repaid to SDR15.7 billion, or approximately €18.3 billion. The SDR 15.7 billion repayment, 81% of Ireland's original €22.5 billion IMF loan facility, represented the portion of the IMF facility that attracted the more expensive interest margin charge.

To facilitate this early IMF repayment, it was necessary to secure the agreement of the EU lenders (the EFSF and the EFSM) and the bilateral lenders (the UK, Sweden and Denmark) to waive the mandatory proportionate early repayment clauses in their loan agreements with Ireland. A condition of their agreement to waive this clause was that Ireland retains an element of IMF funding in order to maintain the IMF's participation in post-programme monitoring.

It is important to note therefore, that the early repayment of any one lender cannot be treated in isolation from other lenders and market expectations for when programme loans are due to be repaid. Consequently, any proposed early repayment of the remaining IMF funds would similarly require waivers from our lenders not to trigger automatic mandatory proportional early repayments in respect of each of the programme funding partners. The issue of post-programme monitoring would also have to be addressed as this was a condition of the €18.3 billion early repayment.

The balance of IMF loans remains at SDR 3.8 billion, approximately €4.7 billion. If Ireland were permitted to repay the full facility earlier than scheduled, potential savings will depend on timing and prevailing market conditions for replacement debt. A current estimate of the potential savings would be in the order of €100-€125 million. For the reasons outlined above, there are currently no plans to make any further early repayments, but I will keep the matter under review.

[1] IMF loans are denominated in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), an international reserve asset created by the IMF. Its value is currently based on a basket of four key international currencies - the euro, Japanese yen, pound sterling and U.S. dollar.

Pension Levy

84. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Finance why a pension provider (details supplied) is still deducting a pension levy of 0.15% from 1 July 2016 from the Procter and Gamble Ireland defined benefit pension scheme as a result of the 2015 pension levy. [19925/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Revenue that the Pension Scheme Levy was introduced in 2011. For the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 the rate was 0.60% of the scheme assets. For the year 2014 the rate was 0.75% of the assets and for the year 2015, the final year of the levy, the rate was 0.15%. Under the legislation, the payment of the levy is treated as a necessary expense of a pension scheme and the trustees or insurer, as appropriate, are entitled where needed to adjust current or prospective benefits payable under a scheme to take account of the levy. It is up to the trustees or insurer to decide whether, when and how the levy should be passed on and to what extent, given the particular circumstances of the pension schemes for which they are responsible. However, the legislation also includes safeguards aimed at ensuring that should the option of reducing scheme benefits be taken, it must be applied in an equitable fashion across the different classes of scheme members that could include active, deferred and retired members. In no case may the reduction in an indi-

vidual member's or class of member's benefits exceed the member's or class of member's share of the levy. With regard to the specific pension scheme that is the subject of this question, I am advised by Revenue that they have contacted the relevant administrator on this matter and the issue is being looked into by the administrator.

Home Renovation Incentive Scheme

85. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Finance his proposals to consider introducing incentive schemes under the home renovation scheme which would provide tax relief for making homes safe such as by ensuring that gas pipes inside a house are a different colour to water pipes and to ensure that no accidental connections to the wrong pipe occur which would cause a serious accident. [19937/16]

86. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider introducing incentives in addition to the home renovation scheme which would permit persons to purchase a gas boiler directly from the supplier when replacing an old gas boiler to ensure that they get the boiler for the cheapest price, given that this would incentivise them to change their old gas boilers, thus promoting safety. [19938/16]

87. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider introducing additions to the home improvement scheme for the installation of triple glazed windows which would radically improve energy efficiency in homes. [19939/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 85 to 87, inclusive, together.

The Home Renovation Incentive provides tax relief by way of a tax credit at 13.5% of qualifying expenditure on repairs, renovations and improvement works on a person's main home or rental property. Works such as the replacement of a gas boiler, replacement of pipes or the installation of triple-glazed windows come within the terms of the Incentive, where they otherwise meet the qualifying conditions.

While promoting the repair, renovation and improvement of properties, the incentive is designed in such a way to ensure that works are carried out by tax compliant contractors and that property owners comply with their LPT obligations. When engaging a contractor, it is a matter for each property owner to secure terms which are considered most favourable to the property owner. This scheme does not cover the purchase of building goods by a taxpayer directly from suppliers.

As the works mentioned come within the terms of the Incentive, where they otherwise meet the qualifying conditions, I have no plans to amend the Incentive along the lines suggested by the Deputy.

The Home Renovation Incentive has been very successful to date, and is due to expire at the end of 2016.

Vehicle Registration

88. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he is aware of an increase in incidences of workers who are resident in the South and employed in the North being stopped by customs officials for suspected non-payment of vehicle registration tax in respect of vehicles which, as part of an employment entitlement, are registered in the North and have been provid-

ed to them through a rental scheme administered by a third party on behalf of their employer; the efforts being made by customs officials to afford such workers, who have applied for the relevant tax exemption and are awaiting for a decision in respect of an appeal, the opportunity to have their cases determined in a timely and just manner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19974/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Revenue has responsibility for the on-going enforcement of the regulations relating to Vehicle Regulation Tax (VRT) payable on the registration of motor vehicles within the State. I am advised by Revenue that there has been no particular increase in the enforcement activity undertaken in relation to VRT matters.

There is a provision whereby a State resident who is employed by an employer established in another Member State who provides a vehicle as part of the contract of employment may, on application to Revenue, be approved to use a VRT Category “A” (passenger) vehicle registered in another Member State (either owned or leased by the employer) for business/private use in the State. The vehicle must be used principally for business use in the other Member State. I am advised by Revenue that there is no particular delay in processing approval applications that fall within the scope of the Regulations.

Sections 145 and 146 of the Finance Act, 2001 provides for an appeal should an approval application be refused. A Public Notice entitled “Appeal Procedures relating to Vehicle Registration Tax” is available to view on the Revenue website at www.revenue.ie. This leaflet outlines in general term the types of appeals that are permitted under the provisions of Sections 145 and 146, the procedures and time limits involved. Where application is refused by Revenue and the applicant avails of the option to appeal to the Tax Appeals Commission (TAC), such an appeal will take time to process by the TAC.

Tax Code

89. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of increasing the earned income tax credit for eligible self-employed persons in 2017 to €1,100 and €1,650 respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20000/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): A Post-Budget 2016 Ready Reckoner is available on the Revenue Statistics webpage at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/index.html>.

In relation to the Deputy’s question, this Ready Reckoner shows a wide range of detailed information, including, on Page 6, the estimated cost to the Exchequer of changes to the earned income tax credit.

All figures provided in the Ready Reckoner are estimates for 2016 incomes from the Revenue tax forecasting model using latest actual data for the year 2013, adjusted as necessary for income, self-employment and employment trends in the interim. They are provisional and may be revised.

Tax Code

90. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of increasing the €150,000 annual investment limit for persons to €200,000, €250,000 and €500,000; under the employment and investment incentive scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20002/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The annual investment limit per individual for the Employment and Investment Incentive is €150,000. This limit was increased from €31,750 in Finance Act 2007, when the Incentive was known as the Business Expansion scheme.

The Deputy may be aware that all of the relief available under the EII was removed from the scope of the High Earners Restriction for a period of three years beginning in 2014. This change was made to encourage greater investments in SMEs, as the High Earners' Restriction effectively limits the amount of specified tax relief that can be claimed in a single tax year to €80,000 or 20% of an individual's adjusted income, whichever is greater.

The cost of increasing the annual investment limit to €200,000, €250,000 and €500,000 would depend on future investments that might exceed the existing annual investment level. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that there is no information available from returns filed which could assist with the prediction of potential increases in investments and thus the potential consequential costs to the Exchequer.

Tax Code

91. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of changing the current rate of capital gains tax for entrepreneurs to levels (details supplied) over a calendar year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20003/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that, as tax returns do not currently separately identify "entrepreneurial" gains from other gains, there are no data available to accurately cost these proposed measures. However, on the basis of making various assumptions, it is tentatively estimated that the costs of the changes proposed in the Deputy's question are as shown the table. It should be noted that given the limited information available to Revenue on the nature of entrepreneurial gains, the estimates provided will vary if different assumptions are employed or new data become available. In addition, these estimates assume no behavioural change.

Chargeable Business Assets up to Limit of	Estimated Cost of 15% rate - (€m)	Estimated Cost of 10% rate - (€m)
€1 million	10	21
€5 million	40	60
€10 million	45	65
€15 million	47	68

VAT Rate Reductions

92. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Finance if there is a domestic or European Union barrier to addressing the value added tax rates on injections and vaccinations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20013/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): VAT rates in Ireland are subject to the constraints of EU VAT law. In general, the EU VAT Directive provides that the standard VAT rate - 23% in Ireland - must apply to the majority of goods and services. Lower VAT rates may only apply where expressly provided for in the VAT Directive or where an historic derogation

applies. One such historical derogation that applies to Ireland under Article 110 of the VAT Directive is the application of the zero rate of VAT to goods and services which were subject to the zero rate of VAT on and from 1 January 1991. Oral medicines apply at the zero rate of VAT on this basis and in this respect orally consumed vaccinations avail of the zero rate of VAT.

Other non-oral vaccination, including injections, were not zero-rated on 1 January 1991 and as such a zero rate cannot now be applied to their supply. Furthermore, as there is no express provision in the VAT Directive for a lower VAT rate to be applied to vaccinations or injections, the only VAT rate that can apply to them is the standard VAT rate.

Charities Regulation

93. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the Central Remedial Clinic; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20048/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware, I do not have ministerial responsibility for grants or funding provided to a charity.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that for reasons of taxpayer confidentiality it cannot comment on individual cases.

By way of general comment, Revenue is responsible for administering the Charitable Tax Exemption scheme in accordance with Section 207 and the Donations to Approved Bodies scheme, insofar as it relates to charities, in accordance with Section 848A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997.

Revenue's role in relation to Section 207 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 is restricted to ensuring that Charitable Tax Exempt status is granted to bodies or trusts that are established solely for charitable purposes and to ensuring continued compliance with the terms of the relevant governing instrument under which entitlement was originally granted. Revenue carries out ongoing reviews of charities to ensure continued compliance with the terms and conditions as set down and can withdraw the entitlement where non-compliance is uncovered.

Section 848A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides for a scheme of tax relief on donations to eligible charities and other approved bodies. The list of approved bodies for the purposes of Section 848A, which includes eligible charities, bodies approved for education in the arts and eligible primary, secondary and third level institutions, is available on the Revenue website at www.revenue.ie.

Revenue has no role to play in the overall regulation of charities, which is the remit of the Charities Regulator. The Revenue Commissioners administer the charitable tax exemption scheme and the tax relief scheme for donations to eligible charities and other approved bodies, which includes vetting and processing applications from bodies claiming exemption from tax on the basis that they are charities. The role also includes monitoring such bodies once they have been granted the exemption to ensure that the relevant terms and conditions continue to be fulfilled.

Appointments to State Boards

94. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Finance the number of appointments he has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago to

date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short-list; the date when the short-list was provided to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20066/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In response to the Deputy's question, I have provided details of the appointments made, the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each State Board. In relation to names on shortlists created, the Public Appointments Service has advised me that it is strongly of the view that those names are covered by personal confidentiality and also that the public interest is not served by disclosing such names. Members of the public will be very reluctant to come forward into the PAS process if their names are subject to disclosure in circumstances where they are not actually being appointed.

Name of Board	Name of Appointee/Board Member	Date of Appointment	Basis of Appointment (e.g. PAS, ex officio, employee representative etc.)	Comments
Central Bank Commission				
	Alan Ahearne member	reappointed 08/03/2015	reappointment	
	Michael Soden member	reappointed 01/10/2014	reappointment	
	Des Geraghty member	reappointed 01/10/2014	reappointment	
	John FitzGerald member	reappointed 01/10/2015	reappointment	
Financial Services Ombudsman Council				

Name of Board	Name of Appointee/Board Member	Date of Appointment	Basis of Appointment (e.g. PAS, ex officio, employee representative etc.)	Comments
	Dermott Jewell Chairperson	Reappointed 29/10/2015	In view of the short term of the Council and the amalgamation of the Offices of the Pension Ombudsman and the Financial Services Ombudsman which will require the experience of the existing Council to effect, these positions were not advertised. The Public Appointment Services advertised for "Appointment to the Financial Services Ombudsman Council" in August 2015	The Minister for Finance made 3 new appointments (Members) and re-appointed 7 (Chairperson /6 Members) to the FSOC over the last 2 years. The Minister re-appointed the Chairperson /6 members of the FSOC on 29/10/2015 (see details below). The Minister appointed 3 new additional members to the FSOC following a PAS competition on 20/01/2016. The date the shortlist was given to the Minister was 18 January 2016.
	Paddy Leydon member	Reappointed 29/10/2015	see above	
	Frank Wynn member	Reappointed 29/10/2015	see above	
	Caitriona Ni Charra member	Reappointed 29/10/2015	see above	
	Tony Kerr member	Reappointed 29/10/2015	see above	
	Michael Connolly member	Reappointed 29/10/2015	see above	
	Elizabeth Walsh member	Reappointed 29/10/2015	see above	
	Valerie Bowens member	Appointed 20/01/2016	PAS	

Name of Board	Name of Appointee/Board Member	Date of Appointment	Basis of Appointment (e.g. PAS, ex officio, employee representative etc.)	Comments
	Deborah Reidy member	Appointed 20/01/2016	PAS	
	Ken Murnaghan member	Appointed 20/01/2016	PAS	
Irish Fiscal Advisory Council				
	Íde Kearney	11/03/2015	PAS process under guidelines on appointments to State Boards	Names of those appointed and relevant position: Íde Kearney, Michael G. Tutty, Seamus Coffey - all Council Members Date short-lists provided to Minister: 25 February 2015 (following which Íde Kearney was appointed); 23 September 2015 (following which Michael G. Tutty & Seamus Coffey were appointed).
	Michael G Tutty	24/09/2015; term ended 31/12/2015; reappointed 01/01/2016	PAS process under guidelines on appointments to State Boards	
	Seamus Coffey	01/01/2016	PAS process under guidelines on appointments to State Boards	
National Asset Management Agency				

Name of Board	Name of Appointee/Board Member	Date of Appointment	Basis of Appointment (e.g. PAS, ex officio, employee representative etc.)	Comments
	Frank Daly Chairman	Reappointed 22/12/2014	Ministerial appointment	Re-appointment of Chairman in Dec 2014 was made by the Minister as permitted under the NAMA Act (i.e. PAS process did not apply).
National Treasury Management Agency (The Board)				
	Willie Walsh Chair	18/12/2014	Ministerial appointment	Regarding the appointments to the NTMA Board on 18 December 2014 a shortlist was submitted to the Minister on 18 December 2014.
	Mary Walsh member	18/12/2014	Ministerial appointment	Ministerial appointment
	Susan Webb member	18/12/2014	Ministerial appointment	
	Martin Murphy member	18/12/2014	Following public advertisement process	
	Maeve Carton member	18/12/2014	Ministerial appointment	
	Brendan McDonagh member	18/12/2014	Ministerial appointment	
Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland				
	Ann Nolan (Member)	Interim Appointment in 10/09/2014 and confirmed appointment 12/03/2015	Ministerial appointment	

Name of Board	Name of Ap- pointee/Board Member	Date of Ap- pointment	Basis of Ap- pointment (e.g. PAS, ex officio, employee repre- sentative etc.)	Comments
	Nick Ashmore (Member)	Interim Ap- pointment in 10/09/2014; Confirmed appointment 12/03/2015	Ministerial ap- pointment	
	Tom McAleese (Member)	24/03/2015	PAS Process	
	Barbara Cot- ter (Member)	18/03/2015	PAS Process	
	AJ Noon- an (Member)	18/03/2015	PAS Process	
	Eilis Quin- lan (Member)	18/03/2015	PAS Process	
	Richard Pelly (Member)	18/03/2015	PAS Process	
	Rosheen McGu- ckian (Member)	27/03/2015	PAS Process	
	John Corrigan (Chairman)	Interim Ap- pointment in 10/09/2014; Resigned 12/01/2015		
	Conor O'Kelly (Chair- man)	Interim Ap- pointment in 12/01/2015; Confirmed appointment 12/03/2015		

Public Sector Staff Data

95. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide information on the number of persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds currently working in his Department and in other public service organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20436/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy may be aware, the Civil Service does not collect data pertaining to the ethnic and cultural background of its currently serving staff. In relation to bodies under the aegis of my Department such information is not generally available. Where the ethnic and cultural background of individuals may be evident within a body under my Department's remit due to the small numbers working for the body, I am of the view, in keeping with Data Protection legislation, that it would be inappropriate to release such information.

However, the Civil Service is strongly committed to equality of opportunity in all its employment practices. As an employer, the Civil Service must fulfil its obligations under equality legislation, particularly the Employment Equality Act 1998. While recognising that people are different, employment practices must ensure that these differences do not lead to unlawful discrimination in the workplace.

The Civil Service Diversity Policy was launched in 2002 and reviewed in 2006. Together with the Civil Service Gender Equality Policy, these policies were designed to ensure that the Civil Service put equality at the centre of its approach to human resource management.

There is a considerable body of legislation and case law dealing with equality in the workplace. In common with all employers, the Civil Service is responsible in law for upholding equality legislation. The Diversity Policy aims to ensure that all civil servants and their customers, both internal and external, can be confident that no one will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, race, religion, disability, or membership of the Traveller community and throughout their working lives. Civil Servants can be assured of equality of participation in their Department, regardless of gender, marital or family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community.

As an employer, the Civil Service will strive to achieve real equality of opportunity by continuously monitoring its employment practices to ensure that they do not perpetuate existing inequalities.

Responsibility for the implementation of equality of opportunity lies with the Head of each Department.

Schools Building Projects Status

96. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the progress with a school (details supplied) including when he will complete this much needed and awaited project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19916/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school building project to which the Deputy refers has been devolved for delivery to Louth County Council. The project is at Stage 1 of the building process which is the preliminary design stage. When the stage 1 process has been satisfactorily completed by the Design Team, my Department expects to be in a position to allow the project to move through the remaining stages of the architectural planning process and onwards to construction.

School Funding

97. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of additional funding for a school (details supplied) including when he will make a decision in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19968/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school to which the Deputy refers was allocated funding to build a stand-alone classroom under my Department’s Additional Accommodation Scheme 2014. Extra funding was subsequently approved to enable the school authority to convert its GP room to a classroom while the classroom is being constructed. These conversion works were completed in December 2015. The school more re-

cently submitted an application for additional funding in respect of traffic management works. This was approved, in principle, subject to tender costs. The school authority was advised to submit a copy of the Tender Report for final approval. The Tender Report has now been received and is currently under review. The school will be advised of the Department's decision when this review has been completed.

Third Level Admissions Entry Requirements

98. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the points entry requirement for colleges in 2017 will change in accordance with the new points system introduced for students doing their leaving certificate in 2017, given that there can be significant differences while adding up the new points system and the current system and if this system will favour all students' ability. [19983/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, from 2017 a new grading scheme for the Leaving Certificate, which will reduce the number of grade bands from 14 to 8 at each level will be introduced. Under the revised scale, the maximum points available in each subject is 100, and the overall maximum points available, excluding Bonus Points for Maths, is 600. This is the same as the points available under the current scale. All students applying through the CAO from 2017 will be awarded points under the new scale, no matter when they sat the Leaving Certificate. Because of the non-linear design and other features of the new points scale, all students regardless of which level they sit, will on average receive slightly less points than under the current system. This means that it is likely that, on average, the points required for entry to particular courses will also be slightly lower from 2017. However, it is not expected that this change will be out of line with the natural variation of required points which occurs from year to year in any case. The new points system has been specifically designed to fairly reward scholastic achievement and I can assure you that very extensive and detailed modelling and testing has been conducted by the higher education institutions, with the assistance of both the CAO and other technical experts, to ensure that the revised scale is fair and equitable to all students. Further detailed information on the new Leaving certificate grading system can be found at www.transition.ie.

School Transport

99. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding a bus service; if he will provide reassurance in this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19989/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): In general, children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 3.2 kilometres from and are attending their nearest national school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann. The Deputy will be aware that a minimum number of 10 eligible children residing in a distinct locality, as determined by Bus Éireann, are required before consideration may be given to the retention of school transport service. In this regard, Bus Éireann has advised that the number of eligible children who have applied for school transport for the 2016/17 school year has fallen below this minimum number requirement and as a result the service will not operate for the next school year. Families of eligible children, for whom there is no school transport service available, are eligible for the remote area grant towards the cost of making private transport arrangements. The terms of the scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

Legislative Measures

100. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason section 28 of the Education Act 1998 has never been fully enacted. [19990/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Programme for a Partnership Government provides that the Government will introduce a stronger complaints procedure and charter for parents, and commence the Fitness to Teach provisions of the Teaching Council Act.

The Programme also provides that the role and the power of an Ombudsman for Education, to whom a parent could complain and appeal on foot of a decision by a board of management, will be examined by the relevant Oireachtas committee to ensure its consistency with the need to ensure better local decision making and accountability to parents.

Both of these commitments are part of a continuum because having a dedicated ombudsman with a power to deal with parental complaints would be a residual, but potentially important function where local resolution has failed.

I think that the relevant Oireachtas Committee will need to consider both programme commitments together. Work already under way in my Department envisages legislative change to Section 28 of the Education Act 1998, and creating an ombudsman with powers to externally review school actions would require new legislation that could be progressed in tandem.

Apprenticeship Programmes

101. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the spend on apprenticeship training and the number of apprentices in training, by employment sector, in each of the years from 2010 to 2016 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20004/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following tables.

It should be noted that the 2016 apprentice population is based on forecast figures.

Table 1

Year	Cost €'000 *	Apprentice Population
2010	68.015	10,172
2011	43.353	8,327
2012	32.166	6,222
2013	27.942	5,711
2014	25.900	6,913
2015	34.800	8,317
2016	43.000	11,250

* **Direct provision costs in ETB training centres plus training allowances at all off the job phases. Excludes certain salary and support costs and provision costs in Institutes of Technology**

Table 2 – Active apprenticeship population by sector

Sectors	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
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Construction	3808	2761	1693	1197	1437	1735	2400
Electrical	3566	2997	2167	2030	2552	3099	4200
Engineering	964	943	893	1021	1233	1441	1800
Motor	1780	1586	1443	1440	1668	2016	2600
Printing & Paper	54	40	26	23	23	26	25
Total	10172	8327	6222	5711	6913	8319	11025

Apprenticeship Programmes

102. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to list the category 2 and category 3 apprenticeships referred to in the 2015 Apprenticeship Council report on new apprenticeship programme proposals; when he will complete these categories and operationalise them for immediate roll-out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20005/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I understand that the Apprenticeship Council has provided feedback to category 2 and 3 consortia in relation to their proposals. Consortia engaged with the call for proposals on the basis that details would only be published of proposals approved for progression to a detailed planning stage. At this stage, I do not propose to publish details of category 2 and 3 proposals.

The Programme for Government commits to providing a total of 31,000 places by 2020 on existing and new apprenticeships. SOLAS and the Apprenticeship Council are preparing a 3 year plan to deliver on the Programme for Government commitments, which will include managing the pipeline of new apprenticeships already identified by the Apprenticeship Council, including those in categories 2 and 3 and looking at the timing and nature of new calls for proposals.

Apprenticeship Programmes

103. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of apprentices, including traineeships projected to be in training, by employment sector, in each of the years from 2016 to 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20006/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The projected apprenticeship population in the existing trades for the years 2016 – 2018 is set out in the following table 1 provided by SOLAS. SOLAS do not currently have forecasts beyond 2018 but their Skills and Labour Market Research Unit will review and extend apprenticeship forecasts later this year.

In addition to forecast numbers in the existing trades, apprentices will also be registered on a range of new apprenticeships that will be developed under the auspices of the Apprenticeship Council. A number of these new apprenticeships will commence registration this year and further apprenticeships will come on stream in 2017 and future years. The Programme for Government commits to providing a total of 31,000 places by 2020 on existing and new apprenticeships. SOLAS and the Apprenticeship Council are preparing a 3 year plan to deliver on the Programme for Government commitments, which will include managing the pipeline of new apprenticeships already identified by the Apprenticeship Council and looking at the timing and nature of new calls for proposals.

Table 2 sets out the projected numbers in traineeship by employment sector in 2016. SO-LAS do not currently have forecasts for participation in traineeship for the years 2017-2020.

Table 1 - Projected numbers in existing apprenticeships by industry sector 2016-2018

Industry Sectors	2016	2017	2018
Construction	2400	2880	3456
Electrical	4200	5040	6048
Engineering	1800	2160	2592
Motor	2600	3120	3744
Printing & Paper	25	30	35
Total	11025	13230	15875

Table 2 - Projected numbers in traineeship by employment sector in 2016*

Traineeship Provision 2016	Projected
Animal Science	40
Built Environment	103
Business, Administration	887
Financial Services	32
Food and Beverage	99
Hairdressing, Beauty	388
Health, Family other	1775
Information	435
Manufacturing	61
Natural Resources	38
Sales and Marketing	207
Science	17
Tourism and Sport	267
Transport	140
Total	4489

* Traineeship programmes are shorter than apprenticeships and these figures include both those on courses at the start of 2016 and projected starters during the year.

Institutes of Technology

104. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his short-term and medium-term plans for the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, given the latest figures confirming that it carried a budget deficit of €2.46 million during the 2014-15 financial year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20015/16]

105. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reserves he refers to when he states the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology has reserves which can be used to meet its deficit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20016/16]

106. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will allocate more funding to the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, if required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20017/16]

107. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has restored

core funding to the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology in Castlebar, County Mayo; if not, his plans to do so in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20018/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 104 to 107, inclusive, together.

My Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to the HEA designated higher education institutions, including Institutes such as Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT). The HEA allocates this funding to the institutions and the internal disbursement of funding is then a matter for the individual institution.

GMIT is entitled to core funding in the same manner as any institute of technology. Core funding is driven primarily by student numbers, either via a free fees contribution or the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) which is the mechanism used by the HEA to allocation funding. The HEA has no scope to allocate additional funding to any higher education institute beyond that level derived from the free fees and RGAM allocations. A review of the approach to funding higher education institutions is to be undertaken by the HEA later in 2016 and this will consider whether additional considerations need to be taken into account within the funding model, such as regional role or contribution or the operation of multiple campuses.

As the Deputy is aware, GMIT has reported an operating deficit of €2.463m in their 2014/15 draft financial accounts. The current reserves held by GMIT total €5.6m but this has been significantly depleted by the deficit noted for 2014/15.

The HEA are closely monitoring the financial position of all of the IoTs and in particular are working closely with those operating in deficit, including GMIT, to ensure appropriate mechanisms are put in place to eliminate the deficit as quickly as possible.

In particular, the HEA has a policy framework in place for engaging with vulnerable IoTs like GMIT, which requires institutes to submit a three year plan to return them to a balanced budget situation. GMIT has presented the HEA with their three year plan which shows a gradual decreasing of the deficit in 2015/16 and 2016/17 with a return to surplus projected in 2017/18. The plan makes it clear that this will be dependent on a successful retention strategy, reductions in staffing and new programme development to increase student demand. The HEA will continue to monitor the position and work with GMIT to address the deficit issue.

Appointments to State Boards

108. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of appointments he has made to State boards from the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short-list; the date when the short-list was provided to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20064/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): For the Deputy's information, comprehensive information in relation to the composition of the State boards of non-commercial bodies under the aegis of my Department is available on my Department's website (<http://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Agencies/>) and this information is updated as appointments are made.

The Deputy should note that there board appointments were made, as laid out below, according nominations made by other bodies as part of procedures laid down by Government

decision and statute and not at my discretion.

The details of the board appointments made since my appointment on 6th May 2016 are outlined in the table.

In regard to the Teaching Council, three appointments were made as provided for in the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015. Under Section 8(2) (c) of the Teaching Council Acts two persons are nominated jointly by the colleges and university providing primary teacher education. I have made these appointments. In addition, I have made one appointment under Section 8 (2) (g) of the Act, namely, a senior official of my Department. This appointment was made in accordance with previous practice and the Guidance on Appointments to State Boards issued by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in November 2014.

In regard to the nomination to the Board of the Higher Education Authority the appointment is provided for under the HEA Act, 1971 and, in the context of a Government Decision of 31 January 2007 which provides for the appointment of the President of the Union of Students (USI) in Ireland to be a member of the HEA.

Appointments made by Minister Bruton since his appointment as Minister for Education and Skills

Body	Name (Identify Chair)	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Basis of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
The Teaching Council	Anne O’Gara	03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	P ITE 1 University 5 Colleges of Education
The Teaching Council	Martin Lally	03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	Minister Rep Department of Education and Skills
The Teaching Council	Pádraig Ó Duibhir	03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	P ITE 1 University 5 Colleges of Education
Higher Education Authority	Annie Hoey	30/06/2017	Ordinary Member	President of the Union of Students in Ireland

School Patronage

109. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether separate religious instruction is immediately necessary to allow for children not of the patron’s faith to attend their local national school; the steps he will take to ensure this is in place for enrolments in 2016 given the report of the constitution review group, 1996, as repeated in the report of the forum on patronage and pluralism in the primary sector, 2012, indicating that religious instruction in national schools must be carried out separately to conform with the Constitution and that this must be changed to allow for multiple religious denominations in all national schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20082/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Religious education is one of the seven curricular areas of the 1999 Primary School Curriculum. Under Article 44 of the Constitution, all parents have the right to withdraw their child from religious instruction in school. Furthermore, under Section 30 of the Education Act 1998, a student cannot be required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent of the student or, in the case of a student who is 18 or more, the student him/herself.

The proposed Admission to Schools Bill includes a specific requirement that school enrolment policies must include details of the school's arrangements for any students who do not wish to attend religious instruction. This is an important measure which will help ensure transparency from the outset as to how a school will uphold the rights of parents in this regard.

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector was established to look at how schools can cater for diversity and ensure an inclusive and respectful environment for all their pupils. The Report of the Advisory Group to the Forum took account of the findings and conclusions of previous groups and committees, such as those of the Constitution Review Group of 1996.

With regard to denominational religious education, the Forum Report did not recommend that religious instruction be removed from the school day, and the Advisory Group made a number of suggestions regarding practical and timetable options for religious education. A follow-up paper to the Forum Report, entitled Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Progress to Date and Future Directions, was published in 2014 and encourages school authorities to consider their policies and practices in a number of areas, including the right to opt out of religion classes and the scheduling of such classes.

The Advisory Group also recommended that Rule 68 of the Rules for National Schools, which referred to a religious spirit informing and vivifying the work of the school, be deleted. Rule 68 was rescinded in January of this year.

The Programme for Government commits the Government to strengthening parental choice and diversity in our school system, in order to ensure that it reflects the diversity of modern Ireland. This includes a commitment to aim to increase the number of non-denominational and multi-denominational schools to 400 by 2030.

Special Educational Needs Staff

110. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will favour an appeal by a person (details supplied) for September 2016 under the special needs assistant scheme. [20083/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is an independent agency with responsibility for processing applications from schools for special needs assistants (SNA) supports, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOS). The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in making recommendations for support, which is set out in my Department's Circular 0030/2014.

All schools were asked to apply for SNA support for the 2016/17 school year by 29th February 2016. The NCSE also continues to accept applications after that date, in recognition that enrolments may not have been completed or where assessments were not completed.

I announced on the 14th June, 2016 that 860 additional Special Needs Assistants will be

available for allocation to schools from September 2016, which is a 7% increase on the existing availability. This will bring the total number of Special Needs Assistants to 12,900, at a total gross annual cost of €425 million.

This increase reflects the growing participation of children with Special Needs in education and will support their full participation and progression within the educational system. In total, the number of SNAs available has increased by almost 22% since 2011, when 10,575 posts were available.

The NCSE advised all schools of their allocations for SNA support for the coming 2016/17 school year on 14th June, 2016. Details of the allocations which have been made to schools have now been published on www.ncse.ie.

Where a school wishes to make an application for SNA support in respect of a child who was not considered as part of this allocation process they may continue to make such applications to the NCSE.

Where a school wishes to appeal the SNA allocation which has been made to them, they may do so through the NCSE appeal process, details of which are set out at www.ncse.ie.

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 the NCSE website.

As the Deputy's question relates to an appeal of SNA allocation by the NCSE to a specific school, in respect of a particular pupil, I have referred this question to the NCSE for their consideration and direct reply to the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Data

111. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide information on the number of persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds currently working in his Department and in other public service organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20435/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Section 6(1) of the Employment Equality Act lists nine grounds that an employer cannot discriminate on and it prohibits discrimination in relation to a person's ethnicity or their culture. As such my Department does not hold records of such information in relation employees and therefore I am not in a position to provide the information sought by the Deputy.

Foireann Roinne

112. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cén líon státseirbhíseach atá earcaithe le bliain anuas ina Roinn a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu; cén grád ar ar earcaíodh iad; cén líon iomlán státseirbhíseach a earcaíodh i rith an ama sin agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [20445/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Tugtar mionsonraí sna ráitis tháblacha leis seo faoi na baill foirne a ceapadh sa Roinn seo le linn na tréimhse 12 mhí is deireanaí. Ceapadh ceathrar cigirí bunscoile agus ní mór dóibhsean bheith inniúil sa Ghaeilge chun dualgais an phoist a chomhlíonadh. Rinneadh ceithre cheapachán chun na Cigireachta

Iar-bhunscoile. Ós rud é go bhfuil siad seo sainiúil don ábhar, tá inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge inmhiannaithe seachas bheith mar inniúlacht riachtanach. Bhí an Ghaeilge mar inniúlacht inmhiannaithe sa chomórtas earcaíochta do shíceolaithe oideachais freisin.

Tá na príomhghráid sa Roinn atá gafa le seirbhísí a sheachadadh do phobal na Gaeilge ag obair i réimsí na gcigireachtaí scoile agus na seirbhísí síceolaíochta oideachais a sholáthraíonn an tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Síceolaíochta Oideachais (NEPS) do scoileanna i gceantair Ghaeltachta agus do na Gaelscoileanna. Tá 24 síceolaí oideachais ag NEPS faoi láthair atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge agus a sheachadann a seirbhísí gairmiúla trí Ghaeilge.

Tá 51 Cigire i Rannán na Cigireachta Scoileanna ag an mbunleibhéal agus tá scoileanna a mhúineann an siollabas oideachais trí Ghaeilge mar chuid dá gceantar ag 48 díobh siúd. Tá scoileanna Gaeltachta mar chuid dá gceantar ag aon duine dhéag de na cigirí seo. Ag an leibhéal iar-bhunscoile is speisialtóirí i réimsí ábhair iad na cigirí ar an mór gcóir. Mar sin féin, cuireann an chigireacht iar-bhunscoile a seirbhísí ar fáil freisin do scoileanna a mhúineann an curaclam trí Ghaeilge. Faoi láthair, is leor an líon ball foirne gairmiúil atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge chun seirbhísí gairmiúla a sheachadadh do na scoileanna i gceist.

Ceapacháin neamh-riaracháin ó 30ú Meitheamh, 2016 go dáta

Síceolaí Oideachais	4
Síceolaí Oideachais Sealadach	2
Cigire Iar-bhunscoile	4
Roinnchigire Bunscoile	4
Tiománaí Sibhialtach (Ceapacháin Aire)	5
Cigire Luathbhlianta	9
Staitisteach	1 (ar iasacht ón Lároifig Staidrimh)
Iníúcháir	1 (ar iasacht ó Oifig an Ard-Reachtair Cuntas agus Ciste)
Cuntasóir Grád 1	1
Suirbhéir Cainníochta Grád 1	1

Ceapacháin riaracháin ó 30ú Meitheamh, 2016 go dáta

Grád	Líon
Príomhoifigeach	1 (Painéal Oscailte PAS)
Príomhoifigeach Cúnta	3 (Painéal Idir-Rannach)
Oifigeach Riaracháin	3 (Painéal Oscailte PAS)
Ardoifigeach Feidhmiúcháin	1 (Áis Lárnach Iarratas)
Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin	10 (5 ón Phainéal Oscailte PAS, 5 ón Phainéal Idir-Rannach)
Oifigeach Cléireachais	53 (46 ón Phainéal Oscailte PAS, 7 ón Áis Lárnach Iarratas nó trí aistriúcháin Duine-le-Duine ó Ranna eile)

Nóta: Ba státseirbhísigh cheana féin na baill foirne ar fad a ceapadh sa Roinn seo ó phainéil Idir-Rannacha, ón Áis Lárnach Iarratas, trí aistriúcháin Duine-le-Duine agus ar iasacht.

Homeless Accommodation Provision

113. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community

and Local Government to ensure that a person (details supplied) is given suitable accommodation for a family, given that the unreliability of the self-accommodation system is incredibly difficult for the family who are moving around. [19934/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): 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. In accordance with section 37(2) of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of homeless services, including accommodation, rests with individual housing authorities.

The allocation of social housing support to qualified households, including determining the priority to be awarded to individual households, for medical or other circumstances, and determining the dwelling required to meet the household's accommodation needs and requirements, is a matter for the housing authority concerned in accordance with the authority's allocation scheme made under section 22 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and associated Social Housing Allocation Regulations 2011. An allocation scheme is solely a matter for the housing authority concerned to make and implement, as it is a reserved function of the housing authority. Furthermore, as Minister, I am precluded under housing legislation from exercising any power or control in relation to any case being dealt with by a housing authority, in this case Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and, therefore, it would not be appropriate for me to intervene in this case.

Local Authority Funding

114. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has published the terms of the local authority infrastructure fund; and the full year cost of its implementation in 2017. [20104/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I recently announced the Government's approval to the establishment of a Local Infrastructure Fund of €200 million to relieve critical infrastructural blockages to enable the accelerated delivery of housing on key development sites and to improve the economic viability of new housing projects in Dublin and in urban areas of high demand for housing.

The Fund will be composed of an Exchequer allocation of €150 million, matched by a €50 million contribution from participating local authorities. Funding is to be allocated to local authorities, following a call for proposals on the basis of a competitive bid process which would be disposed to early delivery of the requisite additional housing at scale, including at affordable prices.

It will be a matter for local authorities to determine their bid proposals to identify the priority development sites proposed to be activated for housing in the immediate and short term through the removal of the infrastructural blockages. It is estimated that the €200m Fund will give rise to additional expenditure of €70m in 2017, €100m in 2018 and €30m in 2019, which incorporates the €50m matching funding by local authorities.

The detailed arrangements on the implementation of the funding are being finalised by my Department, in conjunction with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Waste Disposal Charges

115. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if householders who are already serviced by a pay-by-weight collection system are protected from increases in charges under the agreement he has made with waste companies; if he is aware that letters have been sent indicating that such customers will have their charges raised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19912/16]

120. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is concerned over announced plans by a waste company (details supplied) to change the charges levied on pay-by-use customers following the price freeze announced by the Government and if he is concerned that companies may try to recoup some of the losses from the capping of fixed-charge accounts by massively increasing charges for pay-by-use customers. [19931/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 115 and 120 together.

The Government secured an agreement with all major waste collection companies to freeze charges, so that customers pay no more than they are currently paying for waste collection over the next 12 months for the same level of service.

My Department has met representatives of the waste industry this week, at which a range of issues concerning the consistent implementation of the agreement were discussed.

I have also been clear that the operation of the price freeze by the industry will be closely monitored, indicating that, if there was evidence of the agreement being breached, I would look at whether further legislative measures were necessary to enforce it. Furthermore, the compliance of the industry and its effectiveness in co-operating and implementing these new arrangements are likely to feature within the overall review of the functioning of this waste collection industry.

Constituency Boundaries

116. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he proposes to establish the Dáil Éireann constituencies boundaries commission in July 2016 following the provisional 2016 census returns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19913/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Census 2016 was taken on 24 April 2016 and the Central Statistics Office expects to publish the preliminary results this month. Section 5 of the Electoral Act 1997 provides for the establishment, by me as Minister, of a Constituency Commission upon the publication of those results. The function of the Constituency Commission is to make a report on the constituencies for the election of members of the Dáil and the members of the European Parliament having regard to Article 16 of the Constitution and to the terms of reference set out in section 6(2) of the Electoral Act 1997.

In accordance with section 9 of the Electoral Act 1997 the Constituency Commission must present its report to the Chairman of the Dáil no later than three months after the publication of final census results. These results are expected in late March or early April 2017.

Local Authority Staff Data

117. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of the extra 420 local authority staff who have been appointed to work on the delivery of the social housing strategy, by local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19915/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, each Chief Executive is responsible for the staffing and organisational arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the local authorities for which he or she is responsible. In this regard, following the sanction for staff by my Department, their recruitment and assignment is a matter for each individual Chief Executive.

Recycling Policy

118. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he will introduce the tyre levy; the recycling targets he will introduce as a result; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19918/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): There is a serious problem with waste tyres in Ireland. In discussions prior to the adoption of the 2007 Tyre Regulations, it was made clear that this was the last opportunity for the tyre industry to embrace environmental compliance and take responsibility for the waste it produces. If the required improvement did not happen, it was made clear to the tyre industry that the system would be reviewed and replaced with a full Producer Responsibility Initiative (PRI) model.

As part of a wider review of producer responsibility arrangements completed in 2014, the structural and environmental effectiveness of all aspects of the current system for managing waste tyres was assessed. The results of this examination were stark.

The report, published for consultation in November 2013 and in final form in April 2014, found:

- a non-compliance rate with the Tyre Regulations of 46%,
- a lack of consistent and accurate data,
- that the current system was not tracking data flows well, and
- between 25% and 50% of waste tyres were not accounted for, with widespread illegal dumping.

Following extensive discussions with the tyre industry through the establishment of a Tyres Working Group, the then Minister announced the decision to establish a full PRI scheme for Tyres and Waste Tyres in Ireland on 30 January 2015. Since then, significant progress has been made in discussions with the tyre industry.

There will be no new tyre tax or levy under the new system being introduced; consumers already pay a disposal fee to their tyre retailer whenever they buy a new tyre. The model that is being introduced will formalise a charge that tyre retailers already apply, but which does not currently go towards the cost of managing the waste in all cases, as it is supposed to. It is absolutely right and fair to provide a system that ensures that the existing levy is properly directed in the future, so that the consumer does not pay twice-once at the point of purchase and again,

when the taxpayer has to meet costs incurred by local authorities for the clean-up of illegally dumped tyres.

My Department is in the process of drafting the regulations to underpin the new PRI scheme. The intention is to introduce the visible Environmental Management Charge from 1 January 2017. In addition, the recycling and recovery targets are currently being discussed by the Environment and Targets sub-group of the Tyres Working Group. Their report will then go to the Tyres Working Group and the recommendation of the group will then come to my Department for a decision.

Community Development Projects

119. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide funding for an organisation (details supplied) under the support scheme for national organisations, given that it scored higher than the recommended level for funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19923/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The organisation in question submitted an application to Pobal under the Scheme to Support National Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector. In total 148 applications were received and assessed by Pobal on behalf of my Department with 70 organisations to receive funding.

The quality of applications was very high, leading to a highly competitive assessment process. I approved 70 organisations for funding, at a total of €16.4 million, well in excess of the indicated amount initially advertised, in an effort to fund as many organisations as possible.

There was an extremely high demand for funding under the scheme, and it was clearly indicated that reaching a minimum threshold score of 65% was no guarantee of funding. Having regard to the funding available, 70 organisations were allocated funding, and the minimum score to be awarded funding was 76%. With the substantially increased allocation to the Scheme, there is no scope to award further funding to other organisations.

Pobal is available to engage with the organisation concerned if it requires further information on its application.

Question No. 120 answered with Question No. 115.

Building Regulations

121. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his proposals to introduce improvements (details supplied) to building standards and if he will consider recommending these to the National Standards Authority of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19936/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Building Regulations 1997 to 2014 set out the minimum statutory requirements applicable to the design and construction of new buildings, extensions to existing buildings as well as for material alterations and certain material changes of use to existing buildings and are divided in 12 parts (classified as Parts A to M). Technical Guidance Documents (TGDs) are published to accompany each of the parts and provide guidance indicating how the requirements of that part can be achieved in practice. These TGDs can

be accessed on my Department's website at <http://www.environ.ie/housing/building-standards/tgd-part-d-materials-and-workmanship/technical-guidance-documents>.

Where works are carried out in accordance with the relevant technical guidance such works are considered to be, *prima facie*, in compliance with the relevant regulation(s). Compliance with the Regulations is the responsibility of the owner or builder of a building or works while enforcement is a matter for the 31 local building control authorities.

Part D of the Building Regulations deals with Materials and Workmanship and stipulates that all works are to be carried out with proper materials and in a workmanlike manner. It defines proper materials as those materials which are fit for the use for which they are intended and for the conditions in which they are to be used. The regulations do not prescribe the use of particular products but establish minimum performance requirements that the building or the construction works must achieve.

Requirements relating to the supply of gas and electricity do not fall within the scope of the Building Regulations. The Electro-Technical Council of Ireland is the national body responsible for the harmonisation of standards in the electro-technical field in collaboration with the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) while the Commission for Energy Regulation regulates the activities of natural gas undertakings and natural gas installers with respect to gas safety.

My Department understands that the NSAI, which comes under the remit of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, is the lead agency in relation to the formulation of quality, design and safety standards for heating and plumbing installations and it normally advances such work through the establishment of expert industry working groups. In this context, the NSAI is currently developing a Code of Practice entitled S.R. 50 - Code of Practice for Domestic Plumbing and Heating - Design, Implementation, Commissioning & Maintenance 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. It is anticipated that 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.

Parts G (Hygiene) and L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy) of the Building Regulations already set out specific requirements for the insulation of cold and hot water pipework within buildings in order to protect against freezing. Typically, it is recommended that insulation materials should have low water absorption, be frost resistant and should maintain performance in damp conditions over the long term. Furthermore, the Building Regulations do not prevent any organisation from undertaking a thermal imaging analysis of a building; this is a matter that is entirely at the discretion of the building owner in the context of identifying measures to improve the energy efficiency of the building.

In accordance with the Programme for a Partnership Government, my Department is preparing an Action Plan for Housing with a view to identifying any reasonable and appropriate measures that may be taken in the interests of reducing construction overheads in order to facilitate an increased level of housing output into the future.

Regeneration Projects Funding

122. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to the request this Deputy made to provide a breakdown of 2016 com-

mitments on regeneration projects which were €28 million for Limerick city, €11 million for Cork city, €5 million for Dublin city and €2 million each for Tralee, Dundalk and Sligo, which amounts to €50 million overall (details supplied), if the total allocation for regeneration in 2016 is €104 million. [20028/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The allocation for regeneration projects for 2016 is €50m, as stated in the reply to Question Number 14 of 29 June 2016. Individual regeneration projects are implemented on a multi-annual basis and, accordingly, they receive funding that is spread over the years of their implementation. The €50m allocated for regeneration projects in 2016 is in relation to implementation activities for this year alone.

Regeneration Projects Funding

123. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the breakdown of the allocation of the €32 million to the regeneration of Dolphin House and St. Teresa's Gardens in Dublin 8 (details supplied). [20043/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The approved construction budget, which is subject to review, for phase 1 of the Dolphin House regeneration project is currently €19.1m. This is to cover the construction of 37 new units and the refurbishment of 67 units (100 units in total) and the provision of lift blocks. Other community-related costs are considered as required, such as the provision of CCTV facilities to help reduce anti-social behaviour and annual funding for social regeneration measures.

Dublin City Council has not yet submitted detailed costs to my Department for the St Teresa's Gardens regeneration project but has estimated the construction cost will be some €12.5m, to provide 50 homes (16 apartments and 34 terraced houses). As with the Dolphin House regeneration project, community-related costs are considered as required.

Appointments to State Boards

124. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of appointments he has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short-list; the date when the short-list was provided to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20065/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Details in relation to the membership of State Boards under the aegis of my Department are available on the Department's website at the following link: <http://www.environ.ie/corporate/transparency-data/appointments-state-boards/appointments-declg-state-boards>.

In the case of certain appointments to State Boards, statutory selection procedures must be followed or nominations must be sought from independent nominating panels before appointments are made by the Minister or the Government, as appropriate. In addition, in the case of a number of boards, not all of the appointments to the body concerned are made by the Minister, and in some situations appointments are made by the Minister with the consent of another Minister. Furthermore, appointments to An Bord Pleanála and to the Board of the Environmental Protection Agency are of a full-time executive nature and are governed by statutory processes.

The names of applicants on a shortlist are covered by personal confidentiality and the public interest is not served by disclosing these names.

Fire Stations Provision

125. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the status of a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20077/16]

126. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide funding for a facility (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20078/16]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 125 and 126 together.

The provision of a fire service in its functional area, including the establishment and maintenance of a fire brigade, the assessment of fire cover needs and the provision of fire station premises, is a statutory function of individual fire authorities under section 10 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, my Department 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.

In 2006, a proposal by Laois County Council to build a new fire station at Rathdowney was received by my Department and approval in principle was granted to proceed to the planning stages. Laois County Council submitted design and cost plans in June 2009 for consideration by my Department. At that time, Laois County Council were asked to review those plans with a view to finding savings as it was considered that the project did not offer best value for money. There has been no further progress with this project subsequently.

The Rathdowney fire station project was not included in the current 5 year programme, but it is intended the list of priority projects to be progressed will be kept under review on an annual basis in light of progress with individual projects and the value for money being achieved. In further considering any proposal, my Department will have regard to established national priorities for funding in this area and the totality of requests from fire authorities countrywide. The priorities of Laois County Council, the extent of current and previous investment in Laois Fire Services and the status of existing facilities, having regard to area risk categorisation, will also be considered.

With regard to the provision of toilet and washing facilities for a female fire-fighter, my Department has not received a request for funding from Laois County Council in respect of this matter.

Social Welfare Payments Administration

127. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Social Protection the thresholds above

which social protection clients will be liable for local property tax deductions; and the number of such clients who are liable for deductions in the Dublin South Central constituency. [19909/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I understand that my Department has sought clarification from the Deputy on her specific information requirement and this is awaited.

To date, deductions from social welfare payments to enable payment of Local Property Tax have been made at the request of the customer and no mandatory deductions have been imposed. It is also important to note that even where the deductions are taken at the customer's request, such deductions cannot reduce their weekly personal rate below the basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance personal rate which is currently set at €186.00 per week.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Appointments to State Boards

128. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if there are vacancies on the board of the Citizens Information Board; if so, when he proposes to fill these vacancies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19917/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): 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 legislation provides that the Board may have up to 15 members.

I have recently appointed 7 members to the Board of CIB, bringing the membership to 14. These appointments were made in accordance with the arrangements for appointment to State Boards and included a selection process, conducted by the Public Appointments Service.

I will be making arrangements to have the remaining Board vacancy filled, in accordance with the Guidelines on Appointment to State Boards and having regard to the legislative requirements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits

129. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Social Protection the options available to a person (details supplied) who is out of work due to illness and who is in receipt of payments under the disability allowance scheme and the living alone allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19932/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The rate of payment of disability allowance (DA) quoted by the deputy is the maximum rate payable for a single person who is living alone.

There are currently approximately 2,600 people in receipt of the mortgage interest supplement scheme for which the Government has provided over €7 million for in 2016. The scheme was discontinued for new applicants from 1 January 2014, with customers availing of this support prior to 1st January 2014 retaining entitlement until the closure of the scheme on 1st

January 2018.

The continued payment of mortgage interest supplement does little to assist families in improving the long term difficulty in addressing their mortgage problem. The most appropriate way in which families experiencing mortgage difficulties can be supported is through on-going engagement with their lender to explore sustainable solutions.

It is expected that over the remaining period existing customers will exit the scheme through sustainable solutions being put in place with their lenders; securing employment; or exit strategies sponsored by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, such as the Mortgage to Rent Scheme.

The role of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) has been enhanced with the establishment of a new Dedicated Mortgage Arrears MABS service established to help those specifically with mortgage debt. There are now 27 specialist DMA advisors working across 24 locations countrywide, assisting borrowers to assess the options available to them, signposting them towards ISI where appropriate, or negotiating with lenders on their behalf. Together with the Insolvency Service of Ireland, MABS has a presence at every repossession court nationwide, supporting distressed borrowers who are facing loss of their home, signposting them to appropriate services, including insolvency services, or direct referral to MABS for assistance.

Guidance has recently issued to the Department's Community Welfare Service staff to help them better inform persons experiencing financial difficulty of these additional supports.

Carer's Allowance Applications

130. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19941/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 5 February 2016.

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.

As the applicant's spouse is self-employed and the most recent set of accounts were not submitted as required with the application, the matter was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 9 May 2016 to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied.

Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

131. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19942/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 13th June 2016, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

132. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19944/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The application for carer's allowance in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 4 July 2016 and the first payment is due to issue to the person's nominated bank account on 21 July 2016.

Arrears of allowance due from 14 January 2016 to 20 July 2016, less jobseeker's allowance paid during that period, will issue in due course.

The person concerned was notified of these details on 4 July 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

133. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19945/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The application for carer's allowance in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 22 June 2016 and the first payment was issued to the person's nominated post office on 30 June 2016.

Arrears of allowance due from 18 February 2016 have also issued to the nominated post office for payment on 7 July 2016. The person concerned was notified of these details on 22 June 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

134. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19946/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Carer's allowance (CA) is in

payment to the person concerned since 3 October 2013 in respect of one care recipient.

I confirm that my department received an application for Carer's Allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 24 February 2016 in respect of second care recipient. 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 20 June 2016 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned has requested a review of this decision and submitted additional evidence in support of her application on 1 July 2016. The review is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

135. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection his progress in determining an application by a person (details supplied) under the disability allowance scheme; if supplementary welfare has now commenced payment, with particular reference to the hardship now being experienced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19949/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I can confirm that my department is in receipt of an application for disability allowance from the above named person on 11 May 2016.

On 30 June 2016 the person concerned was requested to supply supporting documentation required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on her eligibility. On receipt of this information, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified of the outcome.

The person in question applied for supplementary welfare allowance and was requested to supply supporting documentation required by the designated officer in order to make a decision on her eligibility. On receipt of this information a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

136. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19965/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my department

received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 21 June 2016. Unfortunately, there are currently delays in the processing of new applications. 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, the person concerned is in receipt of a weekly social welfare support.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Agencies Funding

137. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of offices (details supplied) which he funds through the JobPath scheme including the amount he has allocated, the outfitting he has provided, the number of clients he has utilised and the companies he has hired to promote the centre. [19969/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): JobPath is an employment activation service designed to support people who are long-term unemployed and those most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed to secure and sustain paid employment. The JobPath service in Mallow is provided under contract by Turas Nua Limited. The office was completely refurbished and fitted out by Turas Nua and is in line with the company's normal accommodation standards. Referrals to the Mallow office began in early May 2016 and to date over one hundred jobseekers have been referred.

JobPath is a payment by results model and all costs, including the establishment, fit-out and staffing of offices are borne by the companies delivering the service. JobPath is so structured that the companies will not be able to fully recover their costs until they successfully place sufficient numbers of jobseekers into sustained paid employment. It is not intended to publish the individual payments to the JobPath companies as these are commercially sensitive and to do so would place the State at a disadvantage both in terms of the contracts now in place and any future procurement that may be undertaken.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

138. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will review an application by a person (details supplied) under the disability allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19972/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The person in question appealed to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) a decision by a deciding officer to disallow his application for disability allowance (DA).

Following due consideration and taking all available evidence into account, the appeal of the person in question was disallowed by an appeals officer (AO) on 16 February 2016. He was

notified of this decision in writing by the SWAO on the same date.

An AO's decision is final and conclusive in absence of any fresh facts or evidence.

If the person in question believes that he may qualify for DA, it is open to him to reapply and his eligibility will be determined.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Appeals

139. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied) under the illness benefit scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19977/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Payment of illness benefit to the person concerned was disallowed by a Deciding Officer following an examination by a Medical Assessor of the Department who expressed the opinion that she was capable of work.

An appeal was registered on 4 July 2016 and the Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that, in accordance with statutory requirements, the Department has been asked to provide the documentation in the case and the Deciding Officer's comments on the grounds of the appeal. In that context, an assessment by another Medical Assessor will be carried out. When these 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.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

140. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19978/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 23 June 2016. Unfortunately, there are currently delays in the processing of new applications. 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 my 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.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Eligibility

141. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the eligibility of a person (details supplied) under the illness benefit scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19979/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Illness benefit is a payment for people who cannot work due to illness and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions. One of the conditions is that a person must have a minimum of 39 reckonable contributions paid or credited in the governing contribution year. Claims made in 2016 are governed by the 2014 tax year and only PRSI Classes A, E, H, and P are reckonable for illness benefit purposes.

The person concerned is self-employed and has PRSI contributions at Class S in the 2014 tax year. As Class S contributions are not reckonable for illness benefit purposes the person concerned does not qualify for payment of this benefit.

A person who does not qualify for illness benefit may apply for supplementary welfare allowance or disability allowance subject to the qualifying conditions being met.

Further information on these schemes is available on my Department's website www.welfare.ie.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

142. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Social Protection his views on the possibility of a refund to a person (details supplied) under the state pension (contributory) scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19981/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Section 34 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 provides for the return, subject to any conditions, restrictions and deductions specified in the regulations, of any sums paid in error by means of employment, self-employment, voluntary or optional PRSI contributions.

In the case referred to by the Deputy, PRSI contributions were deducted appropriately and consequently there is no basis for a refund.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 143 withdrawn.

State Pension (Contributory)

144. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will consider pro-

viding persons who have completed 40 years social insurance contributions the right to a full state pension (contributory); the cost of such a change; the number of persons likely to qualify for a full pension; the number of persons currently in receipt of a full pension; the number on a reduced pension, by the different rates of reduction in each country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19996/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): There are a number of criteria which must be satisfied in order to qualify for a State pension contributory, whether at full or reduced level. These include that the person must be aged 66 or over and have at least 520 paid contributions, i.e., a minimum of 10 years. Provided a person satisfies all the relevant conditions, they may qualify for a State pension contributory, the minimum personal rate of which is €93.20, and the maximum personal rate of which is €233.30.

The Deputy should note that there is no fixed amount of paid and/or credited contributions required which will qualify a person for a full-rate State pension (contributory). The total amount of contributions a person will require also depends upon the duration over which they made these contributions, as both of these figures are used to calculate a person's 'yearly average' contributions, upon which their rate of entitlement is based. Since the contributory pension was introduced in 1961, the 'yearly average' contributions test has been used in calculating the level of pension entitlement, where the total contributions paid or credited are divided by the number of years of the working life (from their entry into insurable employment up to the year prior to their reaching State pension age).

I am informed that, if one breaks down claims based upon their banding, there are currently 225,507 State pension (contributory) claims approved for a pension rate based upon the 100% band, and 140,218 claims for a reduced rate band pension (which includes the 98% rate). It should be noted, however, that the rate of payment for a number of these (including some of those on the 100% band) are reduced for other reasons unrelated to banding, such as pro-rata mixed insurance pensions (where the pensioner has mixed insurance records, having worked in both the public and private sector) and pensions where the pensioner worked both in Ireland and another EU country. These individualised various rates of reduction based on the circumstances of each pensioner mean that it is not practical to provide a breakdown of reduced rates of payment in the manner requested by the Deputy.

The additional cost to the Exchequer for people with a completed 40 year Social insurance contribution record qualifying for a full pension would depend on a number of factors –

- Whether the 40 years of contributions would be paid contributions, or could include credited contributions received when in receipt of another social welfare payment (such credited contributions are used in the calculation of the yearly average).

- Whether such a pension could be claimed before age 66 (i.e. many people would have paid 40 years contributions aged 58-65).

- How soon such pensioners accrued a 40 years contributions record.

- The number of existing workers, currently outside the pension system, who would have 40 years of paid contributions.

- Whether such a pension could be paid to people under current pension age and still working, in addition to their wages

- Additional net costs could potentially include people retiring early and ceasing payment of PRSI and taxes.

Any significant measures that would increase the cost of the State pension would have to be carefully costed and considered in an overall policy and budgetary context.

The Deputy should note where people cannot qualify for a full rate contributory pension as a result of an intermittent PRSI record; the social protection system provides alternative methods of supporting such people in old age. For example, if their spouse has a contributory pension, they may qualify for an Increase for a Qualified Adult amounting up to 90% of a full rate pension, which by default is paid directly to them. Alternatively, they may qualify for a means-tested State pension (non-contributory), amounting up to 95% of the maximum contributory pension rate.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Code

145. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the cost of extending social protection supports to the self-employed and permitting such persons to opt into the existing class A structure, paying the rate corresponding to their income level over a calendar year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1999/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Providing a supportive environment for enterprise and employment is fundamental to achieving the Government's aim of job creation. In particular, the role of entrepreneurs and the self-employed will be central to this ambition.

The new Programme for a Paternship Government contains a commitment to introduce an improved PRSI scheme for the self-employed. In addition, we will also ensure that the Earned Income Tax Credit available to the self-employed will match that available to employees, over a number of budgets. This process commenced in Budget 2016 with the introduction of a €550 tax credit for the self-employed. I want to ensure that appropriate sustainable supports are available to the self-employed in the event of certain contingencies arising

The self-employed have been liable for compulsory social insurance since 1988. The self-employed persons pay PRSI at the class S rate of 4% and are covered for the following benefits: State pension (contributory) and Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Pension (contributory), Guardian's Payment (contributory), Maternity Benefit and Adoptive Benefit. Self-employed contributors will also be entitled to the new Paternity Benefit to be introduced later this year. The schemes to which the self-employed have access to amount to €6.3 billion out of a total SIF scheme spend of €8.4 billion, or 75% of SIF expenditure.

The schemes to which the self-employed do not have access are: Jobseeker's Benefit, Illness Benefit, Partial Capacity Benefit, Invalidity Pension, Health and Safety Benefit, Carer's Benefit, Treatment Benefit, Occupational Injuries Benefits including Disablement Benefit.

The cost of extending certain short-term social insurance benefits was considered in the Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund, as at 31 December 2010. The report found that:

i. the effective annual rate of contribution required to provide the core full-rate State Pension (contributory) is approximately 15% at national average earnings. This compares very favourably with the 4% currently paid by the self-employed.

ii. An incremental increase of 1% in contribution rates would be required if Jobseeker's Benefit in addition core State Pension (contributory) is provided.

iii. The average contribution rate required for the core State Pension (contributory) plus the Invalidity Pension is estimated to be in the region of 2%.

Using a number of assumptions based on the existing population of contributors and beneficiaries, the Actuarial Review report estimated the full year incremental costs of extending Jobseeker's Benefit and Invalidity Pension to the self-employed, stated in 2012 terms, to be €87m and €78m in a full year, respectively. This is based on two principal assumptions, namely that the incidence rate of benefit is the same as that applying to the overall population and that the extended scheme reaches full "maturity" in terms of the numbers of additional beneficiaries with immediate effect. It is possible, in practice that the incidence rate may be different and it is likely that the scheme will take time to reach full maturity.

The former Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare published a report in 2013 which examined the options for extension of cover to the self-employed. The Group found that extending social insurance for the self-employed was warranted in cases related to long term sickness or injuries. To this end, the Group recommended that Class S benefits should be extended to provide cover for people who are permanently incapable of work, because of a long-term illness or incapacity.

The Group further recommended that the extension of social insurance should be on a compulsory basis and that the rate of contribution for class S should be increased by at least 1.5 percentage points. The Group concluded that *"extension on a voluntary basis, through either an "opt in" or "opt out" basis, could lead to the selection of bad risks and would undermine the social solidarity and contributory principles that underline the social insurance system."*

I intend to extend, over a period of time, the range of benefits which the self-employed can access through the social insurance system, with particular reference to providing access to benefits for long-term illness/incapacity and treatment benefits. My Department is currently examining the costs and financing of such an extension of benefits as well as the phasing in of access to the benefits. This examination will have to include the level of appropriate additional contribution the self-employed should make for more benefits.

I look forward to making progress on this issue regarding specific proposals, as well as providing later this year a timeframe for implementation.

Social Insurance Yield

146. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reduction in the yield from social insurance in a calendar year if the PRSI employers rate of 8.5% was extended for employees earning up to €385, €390, €395 and €400 per week; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19904/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Currently employers pay PRSI at the rate of 8.5% where weekly earnings are between €38 and €376. Once weekly earnings exceed €376, the rate of employer PRSI is 10.75%.

The reduction in the PRSI yield to the Social Insurance Fund of increasing the upper threshold at which 8.5% rate of employer PRSI applies, is contained in the following table:

Employer PRSI New Upper Threshold for 8.5% Rate	Full Year Cost	Employments Affected
€385	€3.3m	12,860

Employer PRSI New Upper Threshold for 8.5% Rate	Full Year Cost	Employments Affected
€390	€5.1m	19,380
€395	€8.1m	30,000
€400	€10.0m	36,730

These estimates are based on the latest available data and reflect macro-economic indicators for 2017. It should be noted that the estimates do not take possible changes in employer or employee behaviour into account.

Carer's Allowance Applications

147. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20019/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Carer's allowance (CA) is in payment to the person concerned since 14 August 2003 in respect of one care recipient who resides with her.

I confirm that my department received an application for CA from the person concerned on 10 November 2015 in respect of two additional care recipients, her mother and father, who reside elsewhere.

It is a condition for receipt of a CA that the carer must be providing full-time care and attention. It is a further condition that the person being cared for must require full-time care and attention. This means that the person requires from another person continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions, or continual supervision in order to avoid danger to himself or herself, and is likely to require such full-time care and attention for at least 12 consecutive months

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and a deciding officer (DO) decided that the person in question was not entitled to CA on the grounds that neither of these conditions was satisfied.

The person concerned was notified on 16 March 2016 of these decisions, the reasons for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned requested a review and submitted additional evidence in support of her application.

On review it was decided that one of the care recipients, her father, does require full-time care and attention but that her mother, the other care recipient does not.

In order to determine whether the person concerned is providing full-time care and attention, the matter was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 21 June 2016. Once the SWI has reported, the review will be completed and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

148. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20020/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 29 April 2016.

The application was awarded to the person concerned on 5 July 2016 and the first payment will issue to their nominated post office on 28 July 2016.

Arrears of allowance due from 5 May 2016 to 28 July 2016, less jobseeker's allowance paid during that period, will issue shortly.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

149. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20021/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The application for carer's allowance in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 7 June 2016 and the first payment issued to the person's nominated bank account on 30 June 2016.

Any arrears of allowance due, less jobseeker's allowance paid during that period, will issue shortly.

The person concerned was notified of these details on 7 June 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

150. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20022/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The application for carer's allowance in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 9 June 2016 and the first payment issued to the person's nominated bank account on 16 June 2016.

Arrears of allowance due from 14 April 2016 have issued to the person's nominated bank account.

The person concerned was notified of these details on 9 June 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

Carer's Allowance Applications

151. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20023/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 7 December 2015.

The application was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied. Once the SWI has reported, a deciding officer will make a decision as quickly as possible. The person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

Carer's Allowance Applications

152. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20024/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The application for carer's allowance in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 5 July 2016 and the first payment is due to issue to their nominated post office on 21 July 2016.

Arrears of allowance due from 2 June 2016 to 20 July 2016, less jobseeker's allowance paid during that period, will issue shortly.

The person concerned was notified of these details on 5 July 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

Carer's Allowance Applications

153. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20026/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 7 April 2016. Additional information, omitted from the application but necessary in order to make a decision, has been requested by a deciding officer. Once the information is received the application will be processed without delay and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

Carer's Allowance Applications

154. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an

application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20027/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 16 June 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 27 June 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.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

155. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20031/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Carer's allowance (CA) is in payment to the person concerned since 16 June 2005 in respect of one care recipient.

I confirm that my department received an application for (CA) from the person in question on the 11 March 2016 in respect of a 2nd care recipient. The application was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied. Once the SWI has reported, a deciding officer will make a decision and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

156. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20032/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my Department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 11 May 2016. Unfortunately, there are currently delays in the processing of new applications. 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, the person concerned is in receipt of a weekly social welfare support for himself and his spouse.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

157. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20044/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my Department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 26 May 2016.

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 application was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 17 June 2016 to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied.

Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made 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.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

158. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of community employment supervisors who have retired (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20051/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My colleague, Paschal Donohoe T.D., Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, is responsible for issues relating to pension claims for community employment (CE) supervisors

To this end, I understand that the Community Sector High Level Forum was reconvened in November 2015 to scope out the issue with the CE supervisor union representatives (SIPTU and Impact). These discussions are ongoing.

Carer's Allowance Applications

159. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will grant an allowance to a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme. [20054/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my Department re-

ceived an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 3 March 2016.

Carer's Allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to people who have a disability such that they require that level of care.

A person can be considered to be providing full-time care and attention where they are engaged in employment, self-employment or on training courses outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week, provided that they can show to the satisfaction of a deciding officer that adequate care has been provided for the care recipient in their absence.

This application was refused on the grounds that person concerned was working outside the home for more than 15 hours per week.

The person concerned was notified on 18 April 2016 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned has appealed this decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). A submission in support of the decision is being prepared, as requested of the Department by the SWAO, and will shortly be forwarded to that office for determination.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Appointments to State Boards

160. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of appointments he has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short-list; the date when the short-list was provided to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20072/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The statutory bodies operating under the aegis of my Department are the Citizens Information Board, the Pensions Authority, the Pensions Council, the Pensions Ombudsman (which does not have a Board) and the Social Welfare Tribunal.

Details relating to appointments I have made to State boards as Minister for Social Protection are set out in the following table.

The Deputy will note that the table does not include details of those persons who were short-listed but not subsequently appointed. I am of the view that the names on such shortlists are covered by personal confidentiality and that the public interest would not be served by disclosing them.

Appointments to Boards made by Minister for Social Protection

Name of Board or Agency	Name of Appointees	Position Appointed to on the Board	Date of Appointment	Date Short List was Provided
Citizens Information Board	Dr. Joanne Mc Carthy Mr Cearbhall O'Meadhra Mr. John Sommers Mr. Niall Mulligan Ms. Tina Leonard Mr. Ian Power Ms. Mary Higgins	Board member Board member Board member Board member Board member Board member	15 June 2016 Ditto. Ditto. Ditto. Ditto. Ditto.	15 May 2016 Ditto. Ditto. Ditto. Ditto. Ditto.
Pensions Authority	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pensions Council	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Social Welfare Tribunal	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Carer's Allowance Applications

161. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20090/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The application for carer's allowance in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 5 July 2016 and the first payment is due to issue to the person's nominated bank account on 14 July 2016.

Arrears of allowance due from 26 November 2015 have issued to the bank for payment on 14 July 2016.

The person concerned was notified of these details on 5 July 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

162. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20091/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): 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.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

163. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20092/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer having fully considered all of the available evidence 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.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

164. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20093/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an oral hearing of the appeal of the person concerned took place on 14 June 2016 and that the Appeals Officer is now considering the appeal in the light of all of the evidence submitted, including that adduced at the oral hearing. The person concerned will be notified of the Appeals Officer's decision when the appeal has been determined.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

165. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20094/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 7 March 2016.

The application was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied.

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The person concerned was invited for interview with the SWI on 23 June 2016 but she did not attend for interview. The SWI has arranged a further appointment for 14 July 2016. If the person in question wishes to proceed with the application, she is obliged to cooperate with the investigation of her entitlement. Once the SWI has reported, a deciding officer will make a full decision and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

166. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20095/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): 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.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Payments

167. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20096/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The application for carer's allowance in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 4 July 2016 and the first payment is due to issue to the person's nominated bank account on 7 July 2016.

Arrears of allowance due from 25 February 2016 have issued to the bank for payment on 7 July 2016.

The person concerned was notified of these details on 4 July 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

168. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20097/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my department received an application for Carer's Allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 27 April 2016 in respect of two care recipients.

It is a qualifying 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 in respect of either care recipient.

The person concerned was notified on 24 June 2016 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Payments

169. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the carer's allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20098/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The person concerned succeeded in an appeal against the refusal of her application for carer's allowance (CA). Therefore CA was awarded on 4 July 2016. The first payment is due to issue to the person's nominated bank account on 7 July 2016.

Arrears of allowance due from 6 August 2015 have also issued to the bank for payment on 7 July 2016.

The person concerned was notified of these details on the 4 July 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Northern Ireland

170. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the outcome of his recent meeting with the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Ms Theresa Villiers, the First Minister, Ms Arlene Foster, and the Deputy First Minister, Mr. Martin McGuinness; if he has made specific arrangements with the Northern Ireland Executive to work together following the British referendum on membership of the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19970/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have been actively engaged with both the Northern Ireland Executive and the British Government since the results of the recent UK-EU referendum became known. On the Friday when the result was announced I spoke with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the First and deputy First Ministers and the leaders of the Northern Irish political parties.

Last Wednesday, the Secretary of State and I convened the Quarterly Review Meeting of the Fresh Start and Stormont House Agreements, which was attended by the First and deputy

First Ministers and the Northern Ireland Justice Minister and at which the referendum result was discussed. In addition to the Review Meeting, I also held a separate bilateral meeting with Secretary of State Villiers during which we discussed the issue, as well as with the leaders of the SDLP and Alliance Parties.

The referendum outcome was also on the agenda at Monday's NSMC Plenary hosted by the Taoiseach at Dublin Castle. My Cabinet colleagues and I participated together with the Ministers of the Northern Ireland Executive led by the First and deputy First Ministers.

During the NSMC Plenary there was a detailed discussion on the potential impact of the UK referendum result to leave the EU. At the meeting, the NSMC agreed on ten specific areas where there would be joint planning and engagement. Furthermore, the economy and trade; Northern Ireland and British Irish relations; the Common Travel Area; and the EU were highlighted as the four priority areas where implications arise as result of the referendum vote.

The NSMC Plenary followed on from last week's Quarterly Review Meeting of the Fresh Start and Stormont House Agreements and my separate bilateral meeting with Secretary of State Villiers. Naturally the outcome of the UK referendum on the EU was a key element of these meetings and I took the opportunity to assure all those present of the priority the Government attaches to the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland in the aftermath of the referendum.

I emphasised the necessity and importance of working together in the best interests of the people on this island. I reiterated the Government's commitment to work in support of stability, reconciliation and prosperity in Northern Ireland. In this regard the Government will use its influence with our EU partners to seek to persuade them of the need for specific arrangements which protect the key gains of the peace process on this island – a process to which the EU has already made a key contribution. In addition I outlined that the Common Travel Area and cross-border EU funding, are key priorities for the Government in the period ahead.

I am very conscious of the deep concerns and anxiety that have arisen for many people across the community in Northern Ireland about the referendum outcome. The fact that the majority within Northern Ireland who voted to remain now face their preference being set aside as a result of the overall result across the UK raises profound issues.

In this regard, in my bilateral meeting with Secretary of State Villiers we agreed that the Good Friday Agreement remains the foundation for the two Governments' approach to Northern Ireland. The EU referendum result does not in any way diminish the centrality of the Good Friday Agreement or the requirement of both the British and Irish Governments to uphold it. As a co-guarantor of the Good Friday and succeeding Agreements, the Irish Government is determined that its institutions, values and principles – including the right to be British or Irish or both - will be fully protected.

I also spoke with Secretary of State Villiers bilaterally on legacy issues; both in terms of the urgent need to make progress on the establishment of the Stormont House Legacy institutions as well as a number of specific historic cases. I raised the recent all-Party Dáil Motion on the Dublin-Monaghan bombings, the third such motion passed by this House, and underlined the expectation of the Government and the Dáil that progress on this long-standing request would be made. We also discussed the findings of the Police Ombudsman's report into the killings at Loughinisland which was published earlier this month.

At the Review Meeting on 29 June, in addition to the outcome of the referendum, the participants considered the progress made on the implementation of the Fresh Start and Stormont House Agreements. I emphasised the importance of seeking full implementation of these

Agreements and noted the continued delivery on the Government's commitments under the Agreements, as reflected in the Programme for Government. This includes, a contribution of €25 million from the Irish Government in 2019 for the upgrading of the A5, which is in addition to the €50 million already committed, and €2.5 million provided by the Government for the North West Development Fund.

The review meeting also welcomed the publication of the Panel report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland as required under the Fresh Start Agreement, and welcomed that the Executive's Action Plan building on its recommendations will be finalised soon. The meeting also noted the work between the two Governments on an international treaty to provide for the establishment of the Independent Reporting Commission which will monitor progress on ending paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland.

Passport Applications Data

171. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the average waiting time for a passport application or renewal to be processed and finalised; the extent to which the new demand for passports following the British vote to exit the European Union has affected the processing time; the number of additional applications for passports estimated to be applied for as a result of the referendum; if he has allocated additional resources to the Passport Office to enable it cope with the extra demand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1999/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As of 4 July, there were a total of 50,055 applications in the passport system. This is down from 68,000 applications in hand approximately at the end of May and the turnaround times for passport renewals and first-time applications have improved. The level of demand remains very high this year with an 11% rise in the number of applications year-to-date compared to the same period last year. In this context I would point to the notable increase in outbound travel from Ireland this year which is another factor driving demand.

In the case of Passport Express renewal applications, which account for around 90% of all applications in the state, applicants are advised to allow 15 working days. Correctly completed applications currently have a turnaround time of 12/13 working days. First time applications take longer due to additional measures to verify identity and citizenship entitlement and applicants are advised to allow 20 working days. The current turnaround time for first time passport applications is 18/19 days.

To respond to the seasonal spike in demand and the more general increase in applications, a total of 233 Temporary Clerical Officers have been recruited so far this year. This is an increase of 62 officers on last year. The officers are assisting permanent staff with passport entitlement checking and customer care, including the response to queries received via phone calls, emails and social media.

Since the UK referendum result there has been a notable increase in queries concerning Irish passports and citizenship from Northern Ireland, Great Britain and elsewhere. Statistics relating to passport applications are released on a monthly basis. In the month of June this year there were 7,045 applications in total from Northern Ireland and 5,719 applications from Great Britain. These represent increases of 9.5% and 20.5% respectively over the same month in 2015. However, the absolute numbers need to be taken in context as the Passport Service issued over 670,000 passports last year. It is too early as yet to identify the precise impact of the outcome of the referendum in terms of the volume of passport applications from the United

Kingdom and the extent to which any initial increase will be sustained.

I would like to underline that there is no need for concern in terms of freedom of movement or entitlement to an Irish passport. The process of negotiation to enable the United Kingdom to leave the European Union is likely to take two years as envisaged under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union and once the article is triggered. During this period, the United Kingdom remains a member of the European Union and its citizens continue to enjoy full rights including freedom of movement within the EU. At the same time, the referendum has not in any way changed the entitlement to an Irish passport including as it extends to those people born on the island of Ireland and those with Irish citizenship through parents or grandparents born in Ireland.

I would urge people who have concerns about freedom of movement within the European Union and British nationals who are interested in applying for an Irish passport for the first time to get the full facts and research their particular situation before contacting the Passport Service. Detailed information on passport entitlements and procedures is available on the website of the Department at www.dfa.ie.

While there has not been a significant impact on passport services so far from the UK referendum outcome, at least in terms of the overall number of passport applications, my Department will continue to closely monitor the situation. Passport Service staff and other resources will be re-deployed as needed to deal with an increase in applications, if sustained. The need for additional resources will be kept under active review.

Appointments to State Boards

172. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of appointments he has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short-list; the date when the short-list was provided to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20067/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): There are no State boards under the aegis of my Department.

Public Sector Staff Data

173. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide information on the number of persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds currently working in his Department and in other public service organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20437/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Information in relation to the number of persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds currently working in the Department is not recorded. However, there are 322 local staff working in the 80 missions of the Department's network world-wide, all of whom are recruited locally and are drawn from a broad range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The Department is an equal opportunities employer.

Foireann Roinne

174. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála cén líon státseirbhíseach atá earcaithe le bliain anuas in a Roinn a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu; cén grád ar ar earcaíodh iad; cén líon iomlán státseirbhíseach a earcaíodh i rith an ama sin agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [20446/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Tá mo Roinn tiomanta go hiomlán le seirbhísí a sholáthar agus comhfhreagras a fhreagairt trí Ghaeilge nuair is gá. Léirigh iniúchadh den fhoireann i 2012 go raibh Gaeilge líofa nó ag ard-leibhéal ag 55 baill foirne i mo Roinn, agus d'fhógair 160 baill eile go raibh Gaeilge ag meán-leibhéal acu.

Earcaíodh 77 oifigigh ar an iomlán i mo Roinn sa tréimhse ón 30 Meitheamh 2015 – 30 Meitheamh 2016. D'eagraigh An tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí comórtais ina raibh sruth Ghaeilge speisialtóra san áireamh i gcomhair iarrthóirí le Gaeilge líofa agus d'earcaigh mo Roinn 1 Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin agus 2 Oifigigh Cléireachais ó na comórtais seo, le feidhmiú mar Oifigeach Gaeilge na Roinne agus dár seirbhísí saoránach bunlíne in Oifig na bPasanna.

Moltar d'Oifigigh a gcuid scileanna Gaeilge a fhorbairt ina gcuid ama féin, agus tá mo Roinn sásta tacaíocht agus maoiniú a thabhairt ina leith seo. I láthair na huaire, táimid ag tacú le 12 oifigigh le tabhairt faoi ranganna seachtracha i gConradh na Gaeilge agus i nGaelchultúr. Tugadh ceardlanna roimh-postála ag an Oifigeach Gaeilge d'Oifigigh a bheidh ag dul ar phostáil i mbliana.

Ó ceapadh Oifigeach Gaeilge na Roinne, cuireadh Coiste na Gaeilge nua le chéile, le 22 baill sa bhaile agus thar lear. Bhuaile an Coiste leis an Aire Stáit Joe McHugh le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge amach anseo a phlé.

Flood Risk Insurance Cover Provision

175. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has received proposals from the interdepartmental flood policy co-ordination group with regard to access to affordable insurance for those householders who have difficulty accessing such insurance to cover flooding damage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19920/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney): The Inter-Departmental Flood Policy Co-Ordination Group is considering a range of cross sectoral flood risk policy issues, including options for insurance cover for householders. The Group is due to report to me with its recommendations shortly. I will then bring the Group's report to Government for its consideration as soon as possible.

Office of Public Works Staff

176. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 362 of 14 June 2016, if he will urgently initiate a review of staffing at a centre (details supplied) with a view to re-instating the position of a dedicated centre manager as distinct from the current arrangement where the centre is being supervised on the industrial side rather than being managed with proper strategic planning for what is one of the most important heritage centres in the country, if he will visit the centre to observe its importance first hand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19933/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney): I am advised that staffing at the site is being kept under review in the context of overall staffing requirements within the Office of Public Works and the operational demands on site.

I would hope to visit the Centre at an appropriate time.

Teachers' Remuneration

177. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to restore teachers' pay following measures introduced under public sector pay deals. [19975/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Under the Lansdowne Road Agreement (LRA) the process of restoring public service pay is commencing. An important feature of this process is the flat rate increases which are being implemented and which are proportionately more valuable to lower paid public servants. Furthermore and specifically in respect of Teachers, the restoration of the Supervision and Substitution payment is also provided for under the LRA, subject to there being compliance on the part of the relevant unions with the provisions of that Agreement.

Any further consideration of remuneration for any group of public servants will fall to be examined within the provisions of the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013 -2018 (Lansdowne Road Agreement). Any such consideration will also of course have to comply with the terms of the Financial Emergency in the Public Interest Acts 2009 - 2013 (FEMPI), as well as its affordability being underpinned through delivering enhanced work place practices and productivity.

I will establish a Public Service Pay Commission to examine pay levels across the public service. The precise structure of such a commission and the technical aspects as to how it would operate have yet to be decided upon and would require broad consultation, including engagement with staff representatives as was committed to in the Lansdowne Road Agreement.

Interdepartmental Working Groups

178. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the terms of reference of the cross-departmental working group on fuller working lives; and to publish its draft report when it is available. [20030/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Last January the previous Government approved the establishment of an Interdepartmental Working Group to consider policy designed to support fuller working lives. The Group is chaired by an Assistant Secretary from my Department and includes senior representatives from the Departments of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Social Protection, Justice, Health and Education. The terms of reference of the Group are as follows:

1. To review and update the previous work undertaken in 2012 by the cross-Departmental Working and Retirement Group, chaired by the Department of Social Protection;
2. Specifically, to examine the implications arising from prevailing retirement ages for workers in both the public and private sectors;
3. To arrange for engagement with key stakeholders as part of this examination; and

4. To make recommendations to Government on a policy framework aimed at supporting fuller working lives and to address the issues identified.

The Group will be reporting to Government shortly, following which it is intended to publish their report on my Department's website.

Public Expenditure Policy

179. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which various measures taken to protect the economy through the medium of public expenditure, curtailments and reform have addressed the issues and delivered results for the economic benefit of the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20033/16]

180. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which he expects to be in a position to ease the impact of cutbacks necessitated by the economic downturn throughout the public sector over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20034/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 179 and 180 together.

The key focus of fiscal policy over the last number of years has been to reduce the General Government Deficit in line with the targets set under the Excessive Deficit Procedure. The management of public expenditure has played an important role in ensuring that these key fiscal targets have been achieved. The EU Commission has recommended that Ireland has met the requirements to exit the corrective arm of the Stability and Growth Pact at the end of 2015.

Public Service Reform was a key element of the Government's response to the crisis and the strategy for recovery. The reforms implemented over the past five years enabled us to maintain and improve public services in the face of the necessary reduction in staff numbers and budgets, at a time of increased demand for public services. A second Public Service Reform Plan (2014-2016) was published in January 2014. While maintaining an emphasis on efficiency and reducing costs, this Plan puts a particular focus on improved service delivery and achieving better outcomes. While the economy is recovering, the need to ensure that public expenditure increases are sustainable means that reform of the Public Service will continue to be a priority in 2016 and beyond.

Budget 2015 marked the point where expenditure reductions were no longer required to meet our fiscal targets. Gross voted expenditure has grown by an average of 2½% annually in since the end of 2014. The fiscal projections in the Summer Economic Statement (SES) are consistent with the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment to spend at least €6.75 billion more on public services in 2021 compared to 2016. Investment in public infrastructure is vital for the medium and long-term competitiveness of the economy as well as for underpinning social cohesion through the provision of vital services to the public such as schools, public transport and housing. A cumulative additional €5.1 billion is allocated to capital spending in the SES over the period to 2021, in addition to the increases set out in the Public Capital Plan published in September last year.

UK Referendum on EU Membership

181. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform

the extent to which he and his Department have examined the full implications of a British exit from the European Union, if any particular corrective measures are likely to be required in its aftermath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20036/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department has been taking part in the work of the Interdepartmental Group on EU/UK relations which was convened by the Department of the Taoiseach in advance of the UK Referendum on EU membership, as well as the EU Senior Officials' Group that is chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach. It contributed to the risk assessment conducted by the Department of the Taoiseach in advance of the Referendum, and actions relating to the Department are included in the Government's Contingency Framework, a summary of which was published last month.

In addition, the implications of a vote to leave were discussed by the Department's Management Board prior to the Referendum and, in light of outcome of the Referendum, it will continue to be reviewed by senior management, and appropriate arrangements will be put in place to deal with issues arising.

The Summer Economic Statement published last month included an assessment of the upcoming Referendum and in particular the potential impact on macroeconomic forecasts of a decision to leave. As noted in the SES, the Department of Finance will prepare a full macroeconomic projection in advance of Budget 2017. This will include updated estimates of economic growth taking account of developments up to that time.

A key issue for my Department is Ireland's Cooperation Programmes with the UK that are co-funded under the European Regional Development Fund, including the North South PEACE and INTERREG Programmes. Immediately following the Referendum result, and in line with my Department's contingency arrangements, my officials contacted the Commission as well as representatives of the Northern Ireland Executive and the Scottish and Welsh Governments to underscore our commitment to the programmes and to discuss how they would continue to benefit from EU funding.

Public Sector Pay

182. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the degree to which all branches of the public service are likely to benefit from the sacrifices made in terms of pay reduction and longer working hours throughout the economic downturn; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20037/16]

183. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which the targets set by his Department continue to be met throughout the public sector in anticipation of restoration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20038/16]

184. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which the objectives set out in the the Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement 2010 to 2014 and the Public Service Stability (Haddington Road) Agreement 2013 to 2016 continue to be met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20039/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 182 to 184, inclusive, together.

I am satisfied that the Croke Park Agreement and Haddington Road Agreement combined delivered on their objectives by facilitating significant cost savings in the public service paybill while supporting an extensive public service reform agenda in an industrial relations climate of

industrial peace. This was a view shared by the Implementation Body for the Croke Park Agreement in their final report.

The savings made contributed to Ireland reaching the GDP Deficit target of 3% by end 2015 and exiting the Economic Adjustment Programme. Given the scale of the fiscal crisis facing the country and the fiscal consolidation measures required to restore our finances, the contribution made by public servants has been very significant and it is a contribution that I wish to acknowledge.

In addition to delivering on monetary targets, a number of reforms and changes to work practices, such as additional working hours, have been implemented since 1 July 2013. Approximately 15 million additional hours have been provided by staff right across the Public Service. These reforms have contributed to the maintenance and enhancement of existing public services during a period of significant constraints on public expenditure and at a time when public services were under increasing demand.

Due to the difficult measures adopted and the resulting improvement in the economy, the Government has, through the negotiation and agreement of a financially prudent public service agreement on pay and related issues, provided for a gradual unwinding of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Acts as they apply to public servants. The terms of this agreement, the Lansdowne Road Agreement, are being implemented under the FEMPI Act 2015 at a full year cost of €844m to 2018. All public servants covered by the Agreement will benefit, for example a public servant earning €30,000 will receive an extra €2,170 under the agreement. Importantly the Agreement secures and extends the productivity improvements under the Haddington Road Agreement.

The continued improvement in our fiscal position has also allowed for targeted recruitment in 2015 and 2016 to fill critical gaps in public service numbers, due to the recruitment moratorium, and meet additional staffing requirements in frontline services related to demographic change. In total since Q4 2013, the Government has approved to the end of 2016 the recruitment of an additional 18,100 public servants to meet demands for enhanced public service delivery at a cost of an extra €1.1bn to our paybill over three years. These include 4,300 Teachers; 1,500 Special Needs Assistants 1,700 Nurses and over 1,000 consultants/doctors/dentists.

Public Procurement Regulations

185. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which changes in procurement have benefitted the economy during the downturn; if any further reform appropriate to the recovery is warranted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20040/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Procurement reform is a key element of the Government's overall reform programme and is aimed at delivering increased value for money, more accurate and timely data and improvement in the capacity and capability of procurement across the public service. The fragmented procurement arrangements across the public service facilitated amongst other things suppliers charging different public service bodies different prices for the same goods and services. This was not sustainable, as the State could afford to continue to purchase works, goods and services in a manner that undermines the efficient delivery of services.

The central procurement frameworks and contracts established by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) have been designed to optimise benefits including savings to the State

through the strategic aggregation of its buying power. Aggregation arrangements such as multi-supplier frameworks can, where appropriate, address local supplier issues.

The reform of public procurement in Ireland is being carried out in a manner that recognises the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises in this country's economic recovery. The aim is to drive fair, transparent and open competition in the marketplace but also to work with business to ensure that government procurement policies are business friendly

In the three years to the end of 2015, the OGP and its partner sector sourcing organisations in Health, Education, Local Government and Defence had enabled procurement savings of an estimated €165 million.

Given the budgetary pressures facing the public service, public procurement savings can support the dual objectives of meeting our fiscal targets and of maintaining/improving services for the public. The strengthening of procurement professionalisation will in turn provide public bodies who use the contracts and frameworks with increased certainty and reduced risk by providing them with compliant sourcing solutions.

Finally, in relation to further reform of public procurement, the Government has committed in the Programme for Partnership Government to refining the new procurement structures in place and to make adjustments according to best international practice and in conjunction with Irish business.

Question No. 186 answered with Question No. 60.

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

187. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which he expects recruitment throughout the public sector to take place in the course of the current year with particular reference to areas currently experiencing pressure as a result of the embargo on public sector recruitment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20042/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy will recall that at the time of the Expenditure Statement in October 2014 an end to the Moratorium on recruitment and promotion in the public service was announced, to be replaced with new delegated management arrangements to be phased in during 2015 and 2016. These arrangements, which now apply to most Government departments give public service managers the means to respond to service needs as they arise, including considerable flexibility to make staffing and service level delivery decisions at the front line consistent with the resources allocated to pay budgets.

The introduction of the delegated staffing arrangements from 2015, means it is now a matter for line Departments to manage their staffing resources, including recruitment, subject to them remaining within their pay bill ceiling. Each Department can, in turn, determine the suitability of introducing similar arrangements for agencies and offices under its remit.

These new arrangements represent a significant shift away from centralised control and allow for greater flexibility in the management of public service staffing resources. The new approach has also facilitated the introduction of a targeted programme of recruitment into the civil service - my area of direct responsibility in terms of public service employment overall - to address service needs and a shortfall in key skills.

As far as the civil service is concerned significant recruitment has already occurred. At this stage, in advance of the outcome of various competitions, it is not possible to be definitive about actual numbers that will be recruited to the civil service in the course of 2016 or other years. These will be determined by a number of factors including workforce planning, retirement rates and Departments deciding on their optimal grade mix over the period ahead, with reference to their pay budgets.

As the Deputy will be aware, I have responsibility for the Civil Service while my other Ministerial colleagues have responsibility for other parts of the Public Service.

Appointments to State Boards

188. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of appointments he has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago, to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short list; the date when the short list was provided to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20071/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware the Government introduced new arrangements to the appointment of State Board members in 2011. Under the new arrangements departments now invite expressions of interest from the public on their websites for vacancies on the boards of bodies under their aegis. It is open to all members of the public regardless of gender, political affiliations or geographical location to apply for appointment to these vacancies.

The Public Appointments Service Board

Name	Relevant Position
Judith Eve	Chairperson
Fiona Tierney	Holds office on ex officio basis, current CEO (Public Official)
Eddie Molloy	Board member
Anne Marie Taylor	Board Member
Eimear Kenny	Board Member
Paul Lemass*	Official nominee of the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government
Oonagh McPhillips*	Official nominee of the Department of Justice
Damien McCallion*	Official nominee of the Department of Health
David Cagney*	Official nominee of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

**The Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004 states that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in consultation with the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Justice and Equality should appoint members of the Board of the Public Appointments Service. The Board is meant to be representative of our client base.*

The Act also specifies that in appointing members of the Board the Minister shall ensure that at least two of them have either or both civil and other public service experience and knowledge and two of them have expertise in human resource management, customer service and

recruitment outside the public service that the Minister considers relevant.

The Public Appointments Service (PAS) are strongly of the view that the names of those persons on the shortlist are covered by personal confidentiality and that the public interest is not served by disclosing these names. Furthermore, in their opinion, members of the public may be reluctant to come forward into the PAS process should their names be subject to disclosure in circumstances where they are not actually being appointed.

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

189. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of positions he will make available for persons with a disability or special needs as part of the current recruitment campaign for clerical officers and other grades in the public service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20079/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, the civil and public service is an equal opportunities employer and all recruitment campaigns are conducted in strict compliance with the Codes of Practice set out by the Commission for Public Service Appointments. Codes include the Code of Practice governing the External and Internal Appointments of Persons with Disabilities to Positions in the Irish Civil Service and Certain Public Bodies, available at www.cpsa.ie.

Public service bodies are also subject to specific legal obligations in the Disability Act 2005. For example, Part 5 of the Act sets out the requirement of public service bodies:

- to promote and support the employment of people with disabilities;
- to comply with any statutory Code of Practice;
- to meet a target of 3% of employees with disabilities;
- to report every year on achievement of these obligations.

The National Disability Authority (NDA) reports on compliance with this 3% and the 3% target for the employment of people with disabilities in the public service remains in place.

You may also wish to note that a number of Departments and Offices in the civil service are participants in the Willing Able and Mentoring (WAM) Programme which is a paid mentored work placement programme aimed at graduates with disabilities.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities was agreed by the Government last year.

One of a number of key performance indicators in the strategy requires two things to be considered as follows;

- commence a review of the Commission for Public Service Appointment's (CPSA) Code of Standards to ensure that they fully support the employment of people with disabilities in the public service; and
- the establishment of special public service competitions for people with disabilities to meet identified shortfalls in public service employment targets, including where appropriate the provision of alternative recruitment channels for people with disabilities, with work in that regard to be taken forward by the Department of Public Expenditure in consultation with the

Public Appointments Service (PAS);

Consideration of these key performance indicators has commenced.

In the context of the implementation of the Strategy, it has been agreed in principle to increase the public service employment targets on a phased basis from 3% to 6%. This decision requires the making of formal statutory instruments by individual Ministers under Section 47 of the Disability Act 2015.

Lansdowne Road Agreement

190. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding entitlements for An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20080/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Pay issues for public servants are currently determined within the constraints set by the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Acts 2009-2015 while the industrial relations environment is managed under the terms of the Public Service Agreement 2013-2018 (Lansdowne Road Agreement).

My colleague with direct responsibility for matters relating to the terms and conditions of An Garda Síochána, the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality, and her officials, along with officials of my Department, have had discussions with the Garda Representative Association (GRA) over the last number of weeks aimed at facilitating their engagement with the Lansdowne Road Agreement. The Tánaiste has indicated that she believes that there is a pathway to progress on these issues and her Department remains available to work with the GRA. I believe that it would be in the best interests of their members and An Garda Síochána as a whole for the GRA to engage on issues of mutual concern, and am taking a direct interest in the outcome of those discussions.

I note in that context that the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) decided last week to re-ballot their membership with a recommendation to accept the Lansdowne Road Agreement following such engagement.

Capital Expenditure Programme

191. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he expects to provide an additional €1 billion capital investment over and above that outlined in the programme for Government, given the outcome of the British referendum to withdraw from the European Union. [20101/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Planning for the potential implications of the result of the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union is challenging as the economic impact of the UK's eventual exit from the EU will very much depend on the outcome of the negotiations between the UK and the EU. The Government has adopted a Contingency Framework, coordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach, to map out the key issues that will be most important to Ireland.

The prudent economic and fiscal policies implemented over recent years have placed Ireland in a better position to deal with shocks arising from the UK exit from the EU. Unemployment has fallen from a peak of over 15% to 7.8%. Gross general government debt that peaked at over

120% of GDP is expected to fall to 88% at the end of this year. Net debt at the end of 2016 is forecast to be 76% of GDP.

The Summer Economic Statement (SES), published last month, set out the Government's medium-term strategy for sustaining economic growth and for the conduct of budgetary policy. The SES set out a macroeconomic assessment of a UK decision to leave the EU outlining a potential adverse impact on the growth outlook.

The SES includes a proposed increase in cumulative capital expenditure of €5.1 billion over the amount of €27 billion in Exchequer capital investment set out in the Public Capital Plan published last September. The Programme for a Partnership Government outlined a cumulative additional increase of €4 billion. The allocation of this additional funding will be determined as part of the mid-term review of the Capital Plan in 2017 and will take account of emerging priorities.

The proposed budgetary strategy for 2017 set out in the SES is not expected to change materially following the result of the UK's referendum on EU membership. The majority of components feeding into the expenditure benchmark calculation for 2017 are included the European Commission's 2016 Spring Economic Forecast and, based on the forecasts in the SES, the 2017 budgetary strategy is consistent with compliance with the balanced budget rule. In addition, there is a broad consensus as evidenced by the discussion at last week's National Economic Dialogue of the requirement for increased public investment to address infrastructural deficits and reinforce the basis for sustainable economic growth over the medium-term.

As noted in the SES, the Department of Finance will prepare a full macro-economic projection in advance of Budget 2017. This will include updated estimates of economic growth taking account of developments up to that time.

Public Expenditure Policy

192. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the public expenditure contingency planning he is putting in place to provide for the potential economic shock arising from the decision of the United Kingdom to exit the European Union. [20102/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Planning for the potential implications of the result of the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union is particularly challenging. Until Article 50 is invoked by the UK, the precise timescale for the UK's withdrawal from the EU is not known. The economic impact of the UK's exit from the EU will also very much depend on the nature of the new arrangements to be agreed between the UK and the EU.

The Government has adopted a Contingency Framework, coordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach, to map out the key issues that will be most important to Ireland.

The Summer Economic Statement (SES), published last month, set out the Government's medium-term strategy for sustaining economic growth and for budgetary policy and includes a macro-economic assessment of a UK decision to leave the EU outlining a potential adverse impact on the growth outlook.

The proposed budgetary strategy for 2017 set out in the SES is not expected to change materially following the result of the UK's referendum on EU membership. The majority of components feeding into the expenditure benchmark calculation for 2017 are included the Eu-

ropean Commission's 2016 Spring Economic Forecast and, based on the forecasts in the SES, the 2017 budgetary strategy is consistent with compliance with the balanced budget rule. As noted in the SES, the Department of Finance will prepare a full macroeconomic projection in advance of Budget 2017. This will include updated estimates of economic growth taking account of developments up to that time.

As set out in the SES, in the period following achievement of the MTO, the projections provide for a €1 billion per annum contribution from 2019 onwards to a rainy day fund or contingency reserve. This provides a buffer against any unanticipated shocks to the economy.

The prudent economic and fiscal policies implemented over recent years have placed Ireland in a better position to deal with shocks arising from the UK exit from the EU. Unemployment has fallen from a peak of over 15% to 7.8%. Gross general government debt that peaked at over 120% of GDP is expected to fall to 88% at the end of this year. Net debt at the end of 2016 is forecast to be 76% of GDP.

Consistent with the careful and responsible approach taken by Government to date to contingency planning for the result of the UK referendum, the Government will, of course, continue to assess, seek to influence and respond to developments with a view to minimising the adverse impact of the result of the UK referendum.

Public Sector Pay

193. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on the creation of a public service pay commission, including its composition, the date for its establishment and if he has consulted with the trade unions on its composition. [20103/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Programme for Government states that Government will establish a Public Service Pay Commission to examine pay levels across the public service. As I have previously advised, the precise structure of such a commission and the technical aspects as to how it would operate have yet to be decided upon and would require broad consultation. The Commission's work will help Government, staff representatives and the taxpayer to come to a mutual understanding of the challenges of managing the public pay bill over the coming years. I intend to bring proposals to Government shortly on this matter before commencing discussions thereafter with public service unions and associations. This is in keeping with the terms of the Lansdowne Road Agreement which commits the Government to engage with the representative bodies of public servants in advance of deciding on any alternative pay determination structure.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Data

194. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the level of Údarás na Gaeltachta supported jobs on a county basis at 20 June 2015, 31 December 2015 and 30 June 2016, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20011/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): I understand from Údarás na Gaeltachta that job figures are collected annually on a specific date in the last quarter of each year. Consequently the Deputy will appreciate that the organisation does not have job figures for the dates specified in the question. However an tÚdarás has provided job figures for year end 2015 along with year end figures for 2014 and 2013. These figures are outlined in the table.

County	Year ending 31.12.2015	Year ending 31.12.2014	Year ending 31.12.2013
Dún na nGall	2,058	1,942	1,942
Maigh Eo	665	685	728
Gaillimh	2,879	2,835	2,741
An Mhí	239	186	167
Ciarraí	665	671	683
Corcaigh	614	586	577
Port Láirge	148	148	131
Total	7,268	7,053	6,969

Heritage Council

195. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to request feedback and a breakdown on an unsuccessful application by a person (details supplied) for the specialist panel for heritage in schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19910/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): While the Heritage Council is funded by my Department, it is a statutorily independent body and as such I have no role in respect to this matter. However, officials in my Department have requested the Heritage Council to make direct contact with your office to discuss the issue in question as applicable.

Artworks Sales

196. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she is aware of correspondence dated 29 June 2016 from An Taisce - the National Trust for Ireland to her Department concerning five works of art which have been in the care of the National Gallery and which have been issued export licences; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19947/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am aware of the correspondence referred to by the Deputy which was received in recent days. My Department is considering the correspondence and will respond directly to An Taisce shortly.

Post Office Network

197. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on the report of the Post Office network business development group; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19991/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Michael Ring): It is Government policy that An Post should remain a strong, viable company in a position to provide a high quality postal service and maintain a national network of customer-focused post offices in the community. The post office network plays an important role in serving the needs of business and domestic customers alike. However, the postal sector is undergoing significant change, with migration towards electronic communications resulting in core mail volume decline year on year.

In recognition of the changing commercial environment, the previous Government established the Post Office Network Business Development Group, the remit of which was to examine the potential from existing and new Government and commercial business that could be transacted through the post office network. Mr. Bobby Kerr was appointed as the independent chairman of the group and he brought a depth of knowledge and experience in identifying and developing business opportunities for the post office network.

The final report of the group, which was published in January of this year, details 23 recommendations - with network renewal, a basic payment account and motor tax being the three key actions. The final report recommended that An Post should, following appropriate consultation with postmasters and others, review and amend the five-year strategy for the post office network.

A number of working groups have also been established, including a network renewal implementation group, which is being independently chaired by Mr Bobby Kerr. This group is examining the number and spatial distribution of branches, branch modernisation, the streamlining of products and services, postmaster payments and contracts and training and qualifications for post office employees. An Post and the Irish Postmasters Union, IPU, are members of the group, which is of fundamental importance to the long-term future of the network. While good progress has been made to date, the group's work remains on-going.

The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to acting on the recommendations of the final report, including supporting the implementation of a basic payment account and enabling the payment of motor tax through the post office network. Responsibility for implementation of the recommendations in the final report has recently transferred to my Department, along with a number of staff with expertise on the matter.

I recently met with Mr Kerr with a view to finalising a timeframe for the conclusion of the work of the network renewal implementation group and the implementation of the recommendations, which will refresh, renew and reinvent the Post Office Network and ensure its sustainability into the future.

Broadband Service Provision

198. Deputy John Paul Phelan asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the role she envisages for local authorities in the roll out of rural broadband; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19992/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Local Authorities will have a key role to play in the roll out of Rural Broadband. I have already commenced a programme of meetings with Local Authorities to underline this and I intend to meet with each Local Authority Chief Executive over the coming months to reinforce the importance of the rollout of broadband, and explain to them exactly what will be required. I will be asking them to establish dedicated working groups to overcome any possible barriers and to ensure there will be no unnecessary delays to the rollout of this important infrastructure to rural communities.

The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to measures to assist in the roll-out of the network once a contract is awarded. In this regard, I will establish a number of regional broadband taskforces, working with Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Offices, LEADER Groups and other relevant agencies. The Taskforces will help accelerate the broadband network build in rural Ireland, by ensuring that there are no local barriers to deployment and by identify-

ing priority areas for rollout. To this end, they will also develop Rural Digital Strategies, which will include proposals for regional digital hubs.

National Monuments

199. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht how the State paid a sum of €5 million to purchase Numbers 14 to 17 Moore Street, Dublin 1, including details of the valuation process of the properties and of the recipients of the said moneys. [20058/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The cost of the acquisition of Nos. 14 – 17 Moore Street (and part of No. 18) by the State amounted to €4m. The purchase from the previous owner was effected with the assistance of the National Asset Management Agency and the €4 million consideration was arrived at in the normal commercial manner. Half the purchase price was paid to NAMA in 2015 and the balance is due to be paid in the current year.

The decision to acquire the national monument at Nos. 14–17 Moore Street for the State was because of its association with, and key role in, the events of Easter 1916 and in recognition of its significant historical value in that context.

Appointments to State Boards

200. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of appointments she has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short-list; the date when the short-list was provided to her; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20060/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I refer the Deputy to my replies to Questions Nos 599 of 2 February 2016 and 872 of 14 April 2016 in relation to board appointments to bodies under my Department's aegis.

Since 14 April 2016, I have made a number of appointments as set out in the following table.

TABLE: Appointments to State boards from 14 April 2016 to date

Board	Name of appointee
National Concert Hall	Maura Mc Grath (Chair)James CavanaghRebecca Gageby (re-appointment) Gerard GillenEleanor Mc EvoyMáire O'ConnorMichael O'DonovanJohn ReynoldsDon Thornhill
Irish Film Board	Annie Doona (Chair)

Board	Name of appointee
National Museum of Ireland	Catherine Heaney (Chair)John BowenMary CrottyAmbrose LoughlinJudith McCarthyDenise MoroneyDeclan NelsonGearóid Ó TuathaighAndrew PowerLynn ScarffVirginia TeehanAidan WalshIngrid Hook (RDS nominee)Kathleen James-Chakraborty (RIA nominee)Mary O'Dowd (RIA nominee)Karen Wilson (NMI staff representative)

Other than in the case of nominees/staff representative, all of these appointments were made under the www.stateboards.ie process from shortlists provided to my Department by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) of candidates deemed suitable for appointment to the boards in question. The shortlists in question were forwarded to my Department on the following dates:

- Irish Film Board - 19 January 2016;
- National Concert Hall – 26 January 2016;
- National Museum of Ireland – 8 February 2016.

I did not feel it appropriate to make appointments from these shortlists at the end of the previous Government's term of office or during the period following the General Election when the Government was in the course of being formed.

In order to protect the confidentiality of candidates, and to avoid discouraging members of the public from putting themselves forward to serve on boards, I do not propose to disclose the names of shortlisted candidates who have not been appointed to boards.

National Monuments

201. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the provisions she has made to protect Sceilig Mhichíl, Contae Chiarraí, from damage during the filming there; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15604/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am not aware of any current plans to conduct filming at this location.

Previous filming activity in 2014 and in 2015 was subject to the statutory and other requirements prescribed by my Department's National Monuments and National Parks and Wildlife Services to protect both built and natural heritage.

A detailed report was subsequently submitted to UNESCO by the Department which concluded that there had been no adverse impact on either the archaeology or wildlife of Sceilig Mhichíl.

Foireann Roinne

202. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén líon státseirbhíseach atá earcaithe le bliain anuas in a Roinn a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu; cén grád ar ar earcaíodh iad; cén líon iomlán státseirbhíseach a earcaíodh I rith an ama sin agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [20451/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Tuigtear dom gur earcaíodh 18 mball foirne i mo Roinn le bliain anuas. Tá 9 díobh sin, 4 Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin agus 3 Oifigeach Cléireachais, in ann feidhmiú go hiomlán i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla araon.

Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme

203. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health to review, as a matter of urgency, the disabled drivers and passengers scheme to allow consideration of additional medical conditions and disabilities which are not currently covered under it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19908/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme is operated by the Revenue Commissioners and is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Finance.

Health Services Provision

204. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if he will investigate the possibility of assessing a person (details supplied) for occupational therapy and psychology assessment at the earliest opportunity; the reason for the deferral on such services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19924/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, this question 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

205. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an appointment for an operation for a person (details supplied). [19930/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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.

Questions - Written Answers
Health Services Provision

206. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a test for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19943/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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

207. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for endocrinology, with specific reference to type 1 diabetes, at the outpatient department in University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19950/16]

208. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for endocrinology who are children, with specific reference to type 1 diabetes, at the outpatient department in University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19951/16]

209. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if he envisages a decrease in the endocrinology waiting time and numbers at the outpatient department in University Hospital Waterford, with reference to type 1 diabetes, given the temporary consultant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19952/16]

210. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the decrease in waiting times and numbers he envisages in the endocrinology waiting list for outpatients at the outpatient department in University Hospital Waterford, with specific reference to type 1 diabetes, if and when the temporary consultant is appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19953/16]

211. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the information that is required for the consultant to triage the priority of an appointment to the outpatient department in University Hospital Waterford in the waiting list numbers for endocrinology, with specific reference to type 1 diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19954/16]

212. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list, with specific reference to type 1 diabetes, presenting at the emergency department in University Hospital Waterford in respect of the waiting list numbers for endocrinology in the hospital's outpatient department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19955/16]

213. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for type 2 diabetes at the outpatient department in University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19956/16]

214. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if and by how much the waiting times will be decreased for endocrinology, with specific reference to type 2 diabetes, in the outpatient department of University Hospital Waterford, given the addition of the temporary consultant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19957/16]

215. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for endocrinology, with specific reference to type 2 diabetes, in the outpatient department of University Hospital Waterford who are also attending for cardiac care; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [19958/16]

216. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the information needed by the consultant to triage the priority of appointments for the number of persons on the waiting list for endocrinology, with specific reference to type 2 diabetes, in the outpatient department of University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19959/16]

217. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for endocrinology, with specific reference to type 2 diabetes, in the outpatient department of University Hospital Waterford who are presenting at the emergency department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19960/16]

218. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health how the waiting time for persons on the waiting list for endocrinology, with specific reference to type 1 and type 2 diabetes, in the outpatient department of University Hospital Waterford compares with the waiting time for other consultants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19961/16]

219. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health how the waiting time of two years for persons on the waiting list for endocrinology, with specific reference to type 1 and type 2 diabetes, in the outpatient department of University Hospital Waterford compares with the waiting time in other regional or university hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19962/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 207 to 219, inclusive, 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.

Medicinal Products Availability

220. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health why University Hospital Limerick is effectively denying compassionate access to orkambi for very ill patients in contrast to other cystic fibrosis hospitals; why very ill patients are being denied an available and free therapy; why has the Health Service Executive provided no explanation for this to Cystic Fibrosis Ireland, despite repeated efforts on the latter's part; why is University Hospital Limerick in apparent contravention of the Minister where he has urged compassionate use of particular drugs for cancer; why the hospital is saying the drug can be provided from a community pharmacy when the executive states that this is not possible and given that hospital pharmacies are facilitating compassionate use of orkambi in Cork and in St. Vincent's Hospital and Crumlin Hospital in Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19964/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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 Appointments Status

221. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** 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. [19967/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, this question 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.

Health Services

222. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health to review an application by a person (details supplied) for a transfer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19973/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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 the matter with them.

Pension Provisions

223. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a pension; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19982/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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 the matter with them.

Rare Diseases

224. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding an exomphalos day; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19986/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy): Exomphalos is considered to be a rare disease. There are approximately 8000 rare diseases and Rare Disease Day is celebrated across Europe at the end of February every year. This day also has the support of the European Union and the day promotes awareness of a range of rare diseases.

Health and Social Care Professionals Registration Boards

225. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding physical therapists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19998/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Protection of title is a core function of the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and the registration boards established under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005. It is vital that when people access the health services that there is no ambiguity in relation to the profession and the competence of the health service provider that they are attending.

The Physiotherapists Registration Board is currently preparing the necessary bye-laws under the Act to allow it to establish its register in the coming months. The title of *physiotherapist*

will, as a consequence, be protected under the Act for the exclusive use of the board's registrants when the register's 2-year transitional period ends in 2018.

Last year, my predecessor, Leo Varadkar TD, consulted with the Physiotherapists Registration Board and thereafter wrote to a number of relevant organisations about the question of also protecting the title of *physical therapist* under the Act.

He came to the conclusion that prescribing the title of *physical therapist* under the Act as a variant of the title of *physiotherapist* would be the best way to eliminate the ongoing risk of title confusion and the consequent risks to public safety.

He also decided to allow existing users of the title *physical therapist* who are not physiotherapists but who hold qualifications of a certain standard to continue to use the title. New grand parenting provisions will allow such practitioners to apply, on a once-off basis and for a limited period, to register in the physiotherapists register. After this period only qualified physiotherapists will be permitted to register.

The registration board's code of professional conduct and ethics will ensure that all registrants, including those registered under the new provisions, act within the limits of their knowledge, skills, competence and experience.

My Department is preparing the necessary legislation to give effect to the decisions which have been communicated to the Physiotherapists Registration Board and other interested parties.

Medicinal Products Availability

226. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his position on the introduction of the drug Ampligen for the treatment of multiple myalgic encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20029/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Rintatolimod (brand name Ampligen) is an experimental drug in development for the treatment of a variety of chronic diseases and viral disorders, including Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME).

The drug has not been authorised by the European Medicines Agency for the treatment of ME in the European Union. If the drug should receive marketing authorisation in Ireland, it would then be open to the marketing authorisation holder to make the drug available for prescribing, and to apply to the HSE to have the product reimbursed under the State drugs schemes.

I understand that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has declined to approve rintatolimod for use in the U.S., despite conducting several reviews of the drug over the last decade.

Hospital Waiting Lists

227. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list, the average waiting time and the number of persons waiting over six months for laser treatment of kidney stones in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20045/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Review

228. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Health when the interdepartmental committee that was set up to review the nursing home support scheme will be reporting back to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20047/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): When the Nursing Homes Support Scheme commenced in 2009, a commitment was made that it would be reviewed after three years. The Report of the Review was published in July 2015 and included a general examination of the operation of the Scheme as well as the balance between residential care and care in the community. Arising out of the Review, a number of key issues have been identified for more detailed consideration across Departments and Agencies.

An Interdepartmental/Agency Working Group has been established to progress the recommendations contained in the Review. This Group is chaired by the Department of Health and includes representatives from the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the HSE, the Revenue Commissioners and, when required, the National Treatment Purchase Fund.

Four meetings of this Working Group have taken place to date. A specific date has not been set for the Group to conclude its work, but it is in the process of reporting on its progress to date to the Cabinet Committee on Health. This will be done shortly, in line with the Committee's own scheduling requirements.

Primary Care Services Provision

229. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health why there are no primary care psychology services for children in north County Dublin; why no child has been seen by Swords Mater child and adolescent mental health services from the routine waiting list in the past two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20049/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): 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.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland

230. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a nursing personal identification number; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20052/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I wish to thank the Deputy for the matter raised.

Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the NMBI. I have referred the Deputy's question to the NMBI for attention and direct reply.

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

Appointments to State Boards

231. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of appointments he has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the shortlist; the date when the shortlist was provided to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20068/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The nomination and appointment process for boards of bodies under the aegis of my Department is set out in legislation. In line with Government Decision S180/20/10/1617 of 2014 and Guidelines set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform relating to the advertising for expressions of interest in vacancies on State Boards, my Department in conjunction with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) currently advertises for board vacancies as they arise, where I, as Minister for Health, have nominating rights under relevant legislation. Appointments through this process commenced in early 2015.

The following table shows the number of appointments that have been made by the Minister for Health, where the Minister has nominating rights and where the positions were advertised through PAS. The date on which the PAS shortlist was given to my Department, rather than the date on which I or previous Ministers for Health received the names of candidates whose names came through the PAS process has been provided in the table.

Board	Name	Position	Date Shortlist provided by PAS to DoH	Date Appointed
Leopardstown Park Hospital	Denis Duff	Ordinary Member	23/12/2014	16/2/2015
Leopardstown Park Hospital	Dermot Magan	Ordinary Member	23/12/2014	16/2/2015
Leopardstown Park Hospital	Francis Ni Fhlannchadha	Ordinary Member	23/12/2014	16/2/2015
St James Hospital	Paul Donnelly	Chairperson	04/2/2015	17/6/2015
Health Information and Quality Authority	Martin Sisk	Ordinary Member	13/5/2015	29/7/2015
Health Information and Quality Authority	Molly Burkley	Ordinary Member	13/5/2015	29/7/2015
Health Information and Quality Authority	Dr Paula Kilbane	Ordinary Member	13/5/2015	29/7/2015
Health Information and Quality Authority	Stephen O'Flaherty	Ordinary Member	13/5/2015	29/7/2015

Board	Name	Position	Date Shortlist provided by PAS to DoH	Date Appointed
Childrens Hospital Group Board	John Caulfield	Ordinary Member	26/6/2015	16/9/2015
Irish Blood Transfusion Service	Prof Anthony Staines	Chairperson	15/5/2015	14/7/2015
Irish Blood Transfusion Service	Deirdre Cullivan	Ordinary Member	15/5/2015	20/7/2015
Irish Blood Transfusion Service	John Malone	Ordinary Member	15/5/2015	20/7/2015
Irish Blood Transfusion Service	Dr Ronan Desmond	Ordinary Member	15/5/2015	20/7/2015
Irish Blood Transfusion Service	Simon Mills	Ordinary Member	15/5/2015	20/7/2015
Irish Blood Transfusion Service	Yvonne Traynor	Ordinary Member	15/5/2015	20/7/2015
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland	Ann Sheehan	Ordinary Member	04/6/2015	17/6/2015
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland	Fintan Foy	Ordinary Member	04/6/2015	17/6/2015
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland	Graham Knowles	Ordinary Member	04/6/2015	17/6/2015
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland	Paul Turpin	Ordinary Member	04/6/2015	17/6/2015
Health Research Board	Bernadette Hanigan	Ordinary Member	31/8/2015	5/11/2015
Health Research Board	Charles Normand	Ordinary Member	31/8/2015	5/11/2015
Health Research Board	Jane Grimson	Ordinary Member	31/8/2015	5/11/2015
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland	Martin Higgins	Ordinary Member	21/9/2015	29/10/2015
Medical Council	Thomas J O'Higgins	Ordinary Member	5/10/2015	28/10/2015
Dental Council	Eleanor O'Higgins	Ordinary Member	12/11/2015	12/1/2016

Board	Name	Position	Date Shortlist provided by PAS to DoH	Date Appointed
Dental Council	Gerry Cleary	Ordinary Member	12/11/2015	13/11/2015
Dental Council	James Doorley	Ordinary Member	12/11/2015	12/1/2016
Dental Council	Muireann O'Neill	Ordinary Member	12/11/2015	12/1/2016
Health Products Regulatory Authority	David Holohan	Ordinary Member	10/11/2015	27/1/2016
Health Products Regulatory Authority	Brian Jones	Ordinary Member	10/11/2015	27/1/2016
Food Safety Authority of Ireland	Martin Higgins	Ordinary Member	11/1/2016	15/6/2016
Food Safety Authority of Ireland	Ros O'Shea	Ordinary Member	11/1/2016	15/6/2016
Food Safety Authority of Ireland	Mary Cullen	Ordinary Member	11/1/2016	15/6/2016
Food Safety Authority of Ireland	Derek Cunningham	Ordinary Member	11/1/2016	15/6/2016
Health Insurance Authority	Fiona Kiernan	Ordinary Member	4/12/2015	1/2/2016
Health Insurance Authority	James McNamara	Ordinary Member	4/12/2015	1/2/2016
Health Insurance Authority	Sean Coyle	Ordinary Member	4/12/2015	1/2/2016
Health Insurance Authority	Ian Britchfield	Ordinary Member	4/12/2015	20/6/2016

I have not provided the names on the PAS shortlists to the Deputy. This information is covered by personal confidentiality and I also believe that the public interest would not be served by disclosing the names. Persons who may wish to be considered for board membership may be reluctant to come forward into the PAS process if their names were subject to disclosure in circumstances where they were not actually appointed.

Primary Care Services Provision

232. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the primary care psychology services available for children in north County Dublin; the number of children who have been seen by Swords Mater child and adolescent mental health services from the routine waiting list in the past two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20075/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): 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.

HSE Properties

233. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health his plans or if he is considering whether any hospitals owned by the Health Service Executive could be sold to the private sector to operate as privately run hospitals or operated on a public, a private partnership or a joint basis between the executive and a private organisation; if a premises could be leased to the private sector for it to provide the services; the other options he is considering for the use of private funds for developments in or the operation of public hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20076/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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.

Public Sector Staff Data

234. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide information on the number of persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds currently working in his Department and in other public service organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20438/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): There is no requirement for employees in my Department or in agencies under the aegis of my Department to disclose their ethnic and cultural backgrounds and as such, this information is not available.

Horticulture Sector

235. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will grant aid the installation of three-phase electricity, given that the Leader groups are no longer grant aiding such work in respect of the horticulture industry; and if there is any other similar grant scheme for such work. [19884/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector administered by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine provides grant aid at a rate of 40% (50% in the case of young applicant's under 35 years of age) on approved costs associated with capital investments in a broad range of specialised horticultural equipment and buildings that contribute to at least one of the Scheme's objectives of facilitating environmentally friendly practices, promoting the diversification of on-farm activities, improving the quality of products or improving working conditions in the sector.

Approved investments under the Scheme may include costs associated with wiring specialised horticultural buildings or growing facilities for three-phase electricity, however the cost of installing the infrastructure required to bring three-phase electricity to the site is not grant aided under the Scheme.

Agriculture Scheme Administration

236. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will ensure that certain considerations of importance to hill farmers (details supplied) are taken into account in the final submission of the new draft sheep scheme for approval by the European Union Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19948/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The new Programme for Government commits to the introduction of a scheme for sheep farmers under the Rural Development Programme with a budget of €25 million to be provided in Budget 2017. It is important to stress that any such scheme must meet certain specific criteria laid down by Rural Development Regulation.

As regards formulating the design of the scheme as well as its potential operation, my Department has met the Irish Natura and Hill Farmers Association as well as other farming organisations and has received the email referred to by the Deputy. Furthermore officials of my Department met last week with officials of the European Commission to discuss the proposed new scheme in the context of the specific requirements of the Rural Development Programme.

My officials are currently working on the details of the scheme in light of these consultations. It is clear that any scheme must meet the specific requirements of the Rural Development Regulations whereby farmers may only be compensated for any actions they undertake on the basis of costs incurred or income foregone. Furthermore, in any scheme where farmers must undertake actions, those actions must go beyond the normal standards of husbandry practice before they can be considered as an eligible cost incurred by a farmer.

It is important to state that I am very much cognisant of the need to ensure that a scheme takes into account the different production systems in the Irish sheep flock and recognises the different challenges facing both lowland flocks and hill flocks whilst at the same time it must be acceptable to the European Commission in the context of the requirements of the Rural Development Programme. The submissions of all farm organisations are important in this regard. It is my aim that this scheme will deliver tangible benefits to the sheep sector in terms of its impact to on- farm practices whilst maximising the number of participants.

This scheme, in addition to the existing supports available to sheep farmers under the BPS, GLAS, ANC and TAMS, will make a vital contribution to ensuring the continuing viability of the sheep sector in Ireland including those involved in farming hill sheep.

Dairy Sector

237. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his proposals to the European Union Agriculture Commissioner relating to the urgent need to provide additional support for the dairy sector following the Commissioner's statement (details supplied) that the provision of further support for that sector is justified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19971/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I am acutely conscious of the pressure farmers are under at present, and I can assure the Deputy that I am committed to exploring all of the appropriate options for providing assistance to the farm sector through current difficulties.

Volatility in the dairy sector is a global issue to which a cohesive response is essential. Therefore, it is vital that we continue to work closely with the Commission and all other key stakeholders in this regard. Having discussed issues with national stakeholders, I am currently working with Commissioner Hogan and other EU Ministers with a view to finding pragmatic, realistic and workable solutions to these ongoing difficulties.

I believe our focus must remain on providing real, practical and immediate assistance for farmers. In addition to intervention, I have called for the deployment of other measures that will provide real benefit for farmers in the short-term in particular, the bringing forward of the delivery date for direct payments. Such a measure will be of immediate assistance to farmers in acting as a source of immediate cash-flow and a buffer to ongoing volatility.

I have also asked the Commissioner to consider the deployment of a further targeted aid package, similar to that provided last September. The September package gave considerable flexibility to Member States to adopt responses suited to their national circumstances, and I believe such a measure, with appropriate flexibility could play a further important role in 2016.

A number of other market support measures have been put in place at EU level, including an increase in the ceiling for SMP intervention to 350,000 tonnes, which was sought by Ireland. In terms of input costs at farm level, I have called on the Commission to consider looking at temporary suspension of EU import tariffs on fertilisers to reduce input costs for Irish and EU farmers.

I agree that we should continue to look at all means of assisting farmers. But in doing so we should focus on direct and practical measures, and avoid taking any action that would in any way compromise their long-term prospects.

A prolonged period of volatility in dairy markets has been in evidence in recent times. However it is important to remember that the medium term prospects for global dairy markets are good. How we mitigate the current volatility is the challenge. Volatility in dairy markets is a global problem, an EU problem and an Irish problem for which there is no single silver bullet. Fixed price and margin contracts, futures markets and access to increasingly flexible forms of credits are all part of the toolkit that will be required. In this respect we must continue to work with industry and the financial services sector at a national level to ensure resilience is built into the sector in the current period of volatility and going forward, strengthening our position within the global market.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

238. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when he will issue a payment to a person (details supplied) under the Scottish derogation scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19976/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an application for allocation of entitlements under the 'Scottish Derogation' measure of the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme on 25 May 2015.

Under EU Regulations governing the Basic Payment scheme, processing of applications involves administrative and on farm checks and verification of land details submitted. Preliminary checks indicate that the person named is eligible under the Scottish Measure, however, a final decision cannot be made until the outstanding documentation which has been requested from the person named has been submitted. My Department has also been in contact with the person named by telephone regarding this issue.

Beef Data Programme

239. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied). [19980/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The closing date for the receipt of applications under the Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) was 29 May 2015, which was subsequently extended to 5 June 2015. There is no record that a BDGP application was received by my Department for the person named.

The person named advised my Department that he had sent in an application form for the BDGP and lodged an appeal on this basis.

The Terms and Conditions of the BDGP state that applicants are required to produce an Express or Registered post receipt as proof of postage. The person named could not provide such a receipt and so the appeal was rejected and the person named was notified of the position in a letter dated 14 Jan 2016. He was also advised of his right to appeal the decision to the Agriculture Appeals Office, which he duly did.

Following a further review, the Agriculture Appeals Office upheld the Department’s decision to exclude the person named from the BDGP, and notified him of the position in a comprehensive letter dated 29 June 2016.

The person named has been advised of his right to appeal this decision to the Ombudsman.

GLAS Applications

240. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has made a decision on a review of an application by a person (details supplied) under the green low-carbon agri-environment scheme 1; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20014/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an application for Tranche 1 of the GLAS Scheme but following the Department’s pre approval validation checks the application was unsuccessful and therefore was not selected for admission to the scheme.

I understand that there may be an issue with the original assessment of this application and my Department is currently reviewing the application. Once this review has been completed, the person named will be notified of the outcome.

Appointments to State Boards

241. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of appointments he has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short-list; the date when the short-list was provided to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20059/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Since my appointment as Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine on 6 May 2016 I have appointed a total of 9 persons to the Boards of State Bodies under the aegis of my Department. In the

case of a number of State Bodies, while appointments are made by me they are on the basis of nominations from various organisations as specified in the relevant statutes. Details of all appointments made by me are outlined in the following table.

As regards the Deputy's request for the names of all those shortlisted, the position is that my Department must have regard to Data Protection Act, as amended, and, in this context, it would not be appropriate for me to disclose the names of individuals who were shortlisted but not appointed to a State Board.

State Body	Appointee	Position on Board	Appointment procedure (PAS or nomination)	Date shortlist received
An Bord Bia	Mr. John Comer	Ordinary Member	Nomination by a prescribed organisation	Not Applicable
An Bord Bia	Mr. Joe Healy	Ordinary Member	Nomination by a prescribed organisation	Not Applicable
Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board	Mr. Brendan Brice	Ordinary Member	Nomination by a prescribed organisation	Not Applicable
Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board	Dr. Owen McIntyre	Ordinary Member	Nomination by a prescribed organisation	Not Applicable
Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board	Mr Jim Power (awaiting acceptance of appointment)	Ordinary Member	Nomination by a prescribed organisation	Not Applicable
Bord Iascaigh Mhara	Ms Lisa Vaughan	Ordinary Member	Stateboards.ie	9 May 2016
Horse Racing Ireland	Mr. Michael Halford	Ordinary Member	Nomination by a prescribed organisation	Not Applicable
Horse Racing Ireland	Mr. John Powell	Ordinary Member	Nomination by a prescribed organisation	Not Applicable
Teagasc	Mr. Richard Kennedy	Ordinary Member	Nomination by a prescribed organisation	Not Applicable

Public Sector Staff Data

242. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide information on the number of persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds currently working in his Department and in other public service organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20431/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department is an equal opportunities employer and does not differentiate on the basis of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Information regarding the ethnic background of staff is not collected by my Department.

Foireann Roinne

243. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén líon státseirbhíseach atá earcaithe le bliain anuas in a Roinn a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu; cén grád ar a earcaíodh iad; cén líon iomlán státseirbhíseach a earcaíodh i rith an ama sin agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [20441/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Beidh an Teachta ar an eolas gur aithníodh sé phost ina bhfuil gá le hinniúlacht sa Ghaeilge i mo Roinn. I measc na 83 earcach nua i mo Roinn le bliain anuas, earcaíodh Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin amháin a bhfuil Gaeilge aige chun folúntais a líonadh. Tá gach post Gaeilge i mo Roinn líonta anois.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

244. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if there will be a delay in rolling out the national broadband contract; the reason for and extent of such a delay; if he will take action to speed up the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19911/16]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Denis Naughten): The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed services to every city, town, village and individual premises in Ireland. The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to the delivery of the NBP as a matter of priority. This is being achieved through private investment by commercial telecommunications companies and through a State intervention in areas where commercial investment is not forthcoming.

The High Speed Broadband Map, which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie shows the extent of the State Intervention area, which is the subject of procurement. The areas marked BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have previously indicated plans to deliver high speed broadband services. The Department continues to monitor the commercial deployment plans in the BLUE area to ensure that those services are delivered.

The areas marked AMBER on the High Speed Broadband Map represent the target areas for the State Intervention.

The map provides information on a county by county basis with a breakdown of coverage across the townlands in every county. Individuals can check whether their premises is in a BLUE or an AMBER area by scrolling through the map online or entering their Eircode. The Department also has a dedicated mailbox and anyone with a query in relation to the Map should email the Department, quoting their Eircode, to broadband@dcenr.gov.ie.

Over 750,000 premises are the focus for the procurement process, which formally commenced in December 2015 with the publication of the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire ('PQQ') and Project Information Memorandum. Yesterday I announced that my Department has also identified a further 170,000 premises which are currently market BLUE on the High Speed Broadband Map and which are unlikely to get access to services. The intention is to undertake further analysis on these additional premises with a view to including them in the formal procurement process.

I also announced yesterday (5 July) that the Department has now moved to the next stage in

the procurement process. In this Invitation to Participate in Dialogue (ITPD) phase, three qualifying bidders have been invited to meet with the Department to commence the formal dialogue process. The qualifying bidders will shortly be furnished with a draft contract, with detailed specifications for a quality and affordable high speed broadband network.

Following the ITPD stage, which will take a number of months, the Department will issue final tender documentation to bidders. When final tenders have been submitted a winning bidder(s) will be selected for the contract which will comprise one or two lots as set out in the NBP Intervention Strategy. The Department will then enter into formal contract negotiations with the winning bidder(s). It is expected that contract(s) will be awarded by June 2017. There has been no delay in the process since I took office. The timing of each stage of the procurement is however dependent on a number of factors, including the complexities that may be encountered during the process.

As part of the competitive process, the Department will engage with winning bidder(s) on the best roll-out strategy, in order to target areas of particularly poor service, business needs and/or high demand. This will need to be balanced with the most efficient network rollout plan. A prioritisation programme will be put in place in this regard, in consultation with the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. A detailed roll-out plan for the network will be published once contract(s) are in place.

The Programme for a Partnership Government commits also to measures to assist in the roll-out of the network once a contract is awarded. In this regard, Minister Humphreys is leading on the establishment of county or regional broadband taskforces, working with Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Offices, LEADER Groups and other relevant agencies to help accelerate the broadband network build in rural Ireland, once a contract(s) has been awarded.

Appointments to State Boards

245. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of appointments he has made to State boards since the move to use the Public Appointments Service two years ago to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short-list; the date when the short-list was provided to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20062/16]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Denis Naughten): There have been 6 appointments to State Boards under the aegis of my Department in the period 6 May 2016 to date. All of the appointments were made in accordance with the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards which were published by the Department of Expenditure and Reform in November 2014.

The following table sets out the information requested by the Deputy. I do not consider it appropriate to provide details of the names of those persons shortlisted as this information is covered by personal confidentiality. Furthermore, I am advised that releasing such information could discourage individuals from participating in this process in the future.

The shortlist in respect of appointments to the DHDA was provided to my office for consideration on the 30 May 2016. The other 3 appointments related to the appointment of an elected employee member, a re-appointment and an ex-officio appointment of a CEO. Consequently, no shortlist was prepared in respect of those appointments.

Board	Name of appointee	Appointment Type	Date of appointment
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Digital Hub Development Agency (DHDA)	Michael Conlon	Member	03/06/2016
Digital Hub Development Agency (DHDA)	Ann Markey	Member	03/06/2016
Digital Hub Development Agency (DHDA)	Brian Keogh	Member	03/06/2016
Bord na Móna	Paschal Maher	Elected Employee Member	14/05/2016
Bord na Móna	Denise Cronin	Member	23/05/2016 *
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	Jim Gannon	CEO	23/05/2016

* This re-appointment will commence on the 16/09/16 when Ms Cronin's first term has been completed. In line with the Guidelines the process to fill vacancies arising should be formally initiated at least six months before the current member's term expires.

A complete list of all current members and vacancies is available to the Deputy and all members of the public on the State Boards website at www.stateboards.ie.

The Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and I are currently finalising the process of appointments to the Board of Inland Fisheries Ireland. The details of the appointees will be sent to the Deputy upon completion of their appointment.

Foireann Roinne

246. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cumarsáide, Fuinnimh agus Acmhainní Nádurtha cén líon státseirbhíseach atá earcaithe le bliain anuas in a Roinn a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu; cén grád ar a earcaíodh iad; cén líon iomlán státseirbhíseach a earcaíodh i rith an ama sin agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [20443/16]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Denis Naughten): Earcaíodh 34 státseirbhíseach nua i mo Roinn le bliain anuas. Ní féidir a rá cé mhéad acu sin a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu ach ceapadh triúr mar gheall ar a n-oilteacht sa Ghaeilge go sonrach.

Within the last year, 34 civil servants were newly recruited into my Department. It is not possible to say how many of those have Irish and English but 3 were appointed specifically because of their proficiency in Irish.

Roads Maintenance Funding

247. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he will allocate funding to Kerry County Council for the R556 regional road from Tralee to Ballyduff (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19963/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads in its area is a statutory function of a local authority

in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act, 1993. Works on such roads are a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of projects to be funded from these monies is a matter for each local authority. All available grant funding for 2016 has now been allocated.

When allocating grant funding, my Department has emphasised that the commitment of local authorities to contribute significantly from their own resources towards the cost of improving and maintaining the regional and local roads network is essential. Full consideration needs to be given to utilising the Local Property Tax to boost own resources expenditure on regional and local road maintenance and renewal.

Sports Events

248. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will liaise with the relevant sporting bodies to examine an issue (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19985/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick O'Donovan): The development of proposals for the staging of major sports events is a matter in the first instance for the governing bodies of the relevant sports and other event promoters. In that regard, the tourism and sports agencies are available to discuss proposals to host or stage sports events and may be in a position to support those events, subject, of course, to an assessment of the costs/benefits involved in any State financial support. I am not aware of any immediate plans to stage an event of the type mentioned by the Deputy.

Sports Capital Programme Eligibility

249. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of funding for a club (details supplied). [19997/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick O'Donovan): No decision has been made on the timing of any future rounds of the Sports Capital Programme.

Any interested group should register online now at www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie as this portal will be the only way to apply under any future rounds of the Programme.

Appointments to State Boards

250. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of appointments he has made to State boards since the move to use the Public Appointments Service two years ago to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short-list; the date when the short-list was provided to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20074/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Full details of the appointments that have been made to the State Boards under my Department's remit are available on my Department's website at the following link <http://www.dttas.ie/corporate/english/state-board-membership-and-approved-fees>.

It is not the policy of the Department to release the names of those shortlisted but not appointed. I am advised that to do so may discourage future applications.

The dates of short-lists provided to my predecessor are listed in the following table.

I have not made any appointments to Boards under the remit of my Department since taking up Office but I am currently considering a number of appointments.

State Board Appointments	Short-list to Minister
CIÉ	29 May 2015
Bus Átha Cliath	29 May 2015
Bus Éireann	29 May 2015
Iarnród Éireann	28 September 2015
National Transport Authority	10 September 2015

Foireann Roinne

251. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Iompair, Turasóireachta agus Spóirt cén líon státseirbhíseach atá earcaithe le bliain anuas in a Roinn a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu; cén grád ar a earcaíodh iad; cén líon iomlán státseirbhíseach a earcaíodh i rith an ama sin agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [20450/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Earcaíodh tríur státseirbhíseach a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu i mo Roinn le linn na dhá mhí dhéag dheireannach; Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin, Oifigeach Cléireachais agus Oifigeach Raidió Grád III. Earcaíodh daichead státseirbhíseach san iomlán le linn na tréimhse céanna i mo Roinn.

Job Losses

252. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the steps she will take to deal with the significant fall-out for 87 employees and their families with the announcement by a company (details supplied) of ceasing production of cigarette rolls from October 2016 which arises from the implementation of an EU directive which limits the manufacture of cigarettes below 30 grammes which has led to a serious reduction in the production line capacity; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19919/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): Clearly my first thoughts are with the workers affected by the announcement by the company concerned to close its Mullingar facility. I understand that the company has initiated a consultation process with its employees and their representatives who are impacted by the announcement.

In regard to the employees concerned, Ireland has a robust suite of employment rights legislation, which offers extensive protections to employees. Workplace Relations Commission information staff are available to meet staff, either individually or collectively, to discuss their employment rights. I would urge anyone who is in danger of losing their job to make contact with the Workplace Relations Commission.

Any person who has a business idea and wants to consider self-employment should make contact, in the first instance, with the Westmeath Local Enterprise Office to explore available options. The LEO will be able to give advice or guidance on all aspects of starting your own

business.

On the question of job creation in the Region, my Department has published eight Regional Action Plans for Jobs, including a plan for the Midlands. The sectors in the regions targeted in the plan include manufacturing, tourism, food and energy. Actions to be delivered over the period 2015-2017 include:

- A series of actions to promote 25% more start-ups in the midlands, including extra funding, mentoring programmes and establishing new incubator spaces for entrepreneurs like Of-faly Innovation Centre (The Junction) in Tullamore;
- A series of actions aimed at attracting at least 25 additional multinational investment projects to the region by 2019, including building two advance facilities for Athlone, appointing an IDA Regional Manager for the midlands and actions to ensure that key IDA personnel overseas have enhanced knowledge and marketing plans for the region;
- A series of actions to support extra employment growth in the 1052 existing exporting companies within the midlands region, most of which are SMEs;
- Establishing a Midlands manufacturing technologies campus.

While Enterprise Ireland cannot support the company concerned in line with national policy on tobacco control, in terms of job creation in the Midlands and in Mullingar in particular, Enterprise Ireland is focussed on the creation of new jobs through continuing to work with established companies in its client portfolio. As part of a record job creation performance in 2015, Enterprise Ireland created 229 new jobs in County Westmeath.

In addition to marketing the Midlands for new investment, IDA Ireland works with its existing client companies in the area with a view to encouraging them to grow and embed their business.

The State agencies will continue to work closely with each other, and with local interests, in line with the Midlands Regional Action Plan for Jobs, to support an integrated approach to job creation in Mullingar and the wider region.

I hope therefore that, through the Action Plan, many new employment opportunities will be created.

Consumer Protection

253. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she is concerned at the consumer protection implications of a company (details supplied) changing the terms of a customer's contract, but refusing to release the customer from the contract and refusing to refund moneys already paid under the contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19922/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): Determination on whether consumer protection legislation has been breached is ultimately a matter for the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) and/or the Courts depending on the relevant legislative provision. The CCPC, which is statutorily independent in the exercise of its enforcement function, has advised me that the matter referred to in the Deputy's question is under examination along with a number of other consumer issues which have arisen as a result of the introduction of a pay by weight charging structure for household

waste. The CCPC has further advised that it cannot comment on the matter or give a time frame for the completion of its examination.

In 2012 and 2013, the CCPC's predecessor the National Consumer Agency (NCA) took extensive enforcement action in the waste sector following a review of the terms and conditions being used by domestic waste operators after issues were identified in relation to pricing, transparency and contractual matters in this sector. The NCA secured undertakings from seven waste operators that their consumer contracts would be amended to remove terms which the NCA considered to be unfair

IDA Site Visits

254. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Industrial Development Agency client visits in quarter 1 and quarter 2 of 2016, by county, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20007/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): IDA Ireland collates data on its site visits on a quarterly basis. The latest data available is for the first quarter of 2016, during which there were 136 IDA Ireland-sponsored site visits countrywide. The breakdown is provided in the following table. Figures for the second quarter will be available early next month.

It is important to note that data on site visits is not an accurate measure of the level of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) activity in a region or county. That is partly because approximately 70% of all FDI investment won by IDA Ireland comes from its existing client base, rather than new companies.

The number of site visits to a particular county is also better viewed against the background of the wider progress IDA Ireland is making in generating new jobs across the country. This can be seen in the Agency's record 2015 results, in which a total of 18,983 jobs were created with employment in IDA Ireland client companies rising to over 187,000. The Agency has also made regional development a cornerstone of its five-year strategy and is targeting a minimum increase in investment of 30%-40% in each individual region outside Dublin.

IDA Ireland Jobs Statistics 2015; Site Visits 2015 and Quarter 1 2016 by County

County	No. of Companies	Total Jobs	New Jobs - 2015	Site Visits 2015	Site Visits Q1 2016
Carlow	7	768	19	1	0
Cavan	7	1,165	29	0	0
Clare	68	6,599	646	12	3
Cork	148	31,900	4,062	48	11
Donegal	12	2,918	330	5	1
Dublin	652	77,244	8,864	242	57
Galway	60	14,297	1,267	41	10
Kerry	12	1,931	89	6	1
Kildare	22	10,313	679	7	5
Kilkenny	5	650	9	10	4
Laois	2	97	10	4	0
Leitrim	4	423	16	8	1

County	No. of Companies	Total Jobs	New Jobs - 2015	Site Visits 2015	Site Visits Q1 2016
Limerick	52	8,849	1,018	40	9
Longford	5	686	46	2	1
Louth	21	3,245	317	20	5
Mayo	18	3,981	159	3	2
Meath	17	1,571	89	7	2
Monaghan	5	146	52	2	0
Offaly	10	902	58	8	1
Roscommon	9	936	99	2	0
Sligo	22	2,029	132	15	4
Tipperary	12	3,518	95	12	4
Waterford	33	5,662	536	31	4
Westmeath	16	2,529	212	28	9
Wexford	17	2,486	101	4	1
Wicklow	18	2,211	49	7	1
Total	1,254	187,056	18,983	565	136

IDA Jobs Data

255. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the level of Industrial Development Agency supported jobs at 20 June 2015, 31 December 2015 and 30 June 2016, by county, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20008/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): IDA Ireland's official employment figures are drawn from an employment survey conducted by my Department on an annual basis. It is therefore not possible to provide job numbers mid-year. The following table provides a breakdown of jobs created in IDA Ireland client companies in 2014 and 2015. The figures for 2016 will be available early in 2017 when the next survey is completed.

2015 saw the highest level of employment in IDA Ireland client companies in its 67-year history, with 187,056 people now employed in companies supported by the Agency. 18,983 new jobs were created across a range of sectors, with every region of Ireland posting net employment gains. The total annual net job gain amounted to 11,833, which compares favourably to the figure of 7,131 for the preceding year – a year-on-year rise of 66%.

Total and New Jobs by County 2014-2015

County		2014	2015
Carlow	Total Jobs	749	768
Carlow	New Jobs	45	19
Cavan	Total Jobs	1,136	1,165
Cavan	New Jobs	27	29
Clare	Total Jobs	6,477	6,599
Clare	New Jobs	443	646
Cork	Total Jobs	28,471	31,900
Cork	New Jobs	2,209	4,062

County		2014	2015
Donegal	Total Jobs	2,607	2,918
Donegal	New Jobs	247	330
Dublin	Total Jobs	71,432	77,244
Dublin	New Jobs	8,236	8,864
Galway	Total Jobs	13,815	14,297
Galway	New Jobs	1,097	1,267
Kerry	Total Jobs	1,874	1,931
Kerry	New Jobs	247	89
Kildare	Total Jobs	10,222	10,313
Kildare	New Jobs	463	679
Kilkenny	Total Jobs	716	650
Kilkenny	New Jobs	124	9
Laois	Total Jobs	87	97
Laois	New Jobs	9	10
Leitrim	Total Jobs	411	423
Leitrim	New Jobs	4	16
Limerick	Total Jobs	7,939	8,849
Limerick	New Jobs	764	1,018
Longford	Total Jobs	650	686
Longford	New Jobs	10	46
Louth	Total Jobs	3,029	3,245
Louth	New Jobs	494	317
Mayo	Total Jobs	3,932	3,981
Mayo	New Jobs	294	159
Meath	Total Jobs	1,552	1,571
Meath	New Jobs	69	89
Monaghan	Total Jobs	275	146
Monaghan	New Jobs	13	52
Offaly	Total Jobs	890	902
Offaly	New Jobs	44	58
Roscommon	Total Jobs	823	936
Roscommon	New Jobs	45	99
Sligo	Total Jobs	2,061	2,029
Sligo	New Jobs	65	132
Tipperary North Riding	Total Jobs	298	318
Tipperary North Riding	New Jobs	0	25
Tipperary South Riding	Total Jobs	3,246	3,200
Tipperary South Riding	New Jobs	229	70
Waterford	Total Jobs	5,248	5,662
Waterford	New Jobs	353	536

County		2014	2015
Westmeath	Total Jobs	2,440	2,529
Westmeath	New Jobs	261	212
Wexford	Total Jobs	2,503	2,486
Wexford	New Jobs	196	101
Wicklow	Total Jobs	2,340	2,211
Wicklow	New Jobs	35	49
Total	Total Jobs	175,223	187,056
Total	New Jobs	16,023	18,983

Enterprise Ireland

256. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the level of Enterprise Ireland supported jobs at 20 June 2015, 31 December 2015 and 30 June 2016, by county, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20009/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): Enterprise Ireland, the Government agency responsible for developing Irish business globally reported the creation of 21,118 new jobs by client companies in 2015. This translates into a net increase of 10,169 jobs (taking account of job losses) in Enterprise Ireland supported businesses and brings total employment in these companies to 192,223 for 2015 - a record high for the agency. Almost two thirds of the new jobs created were outside Dublin and all of the regions recorded increases in full-time employment over the period.

Employment data for Enterprise Ireland is collected annually as part of my Department's Annual Employment Survey. As a result, it is not possible to provide specific employment figures for 20 June 2015 or 30 June 2016.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of Enterprise Ireland supported jobs, by county, at 31 December 2015.

Table 1 - Breakdown by county of Enterprise Ireland supported jobs 2014-2015

	Enterprise Ireland	2014	2015
Carlow	Total Jobs	2,798	2,852
Carlow	New Jobs	429	234
Cavan	Total Jobs	4,543	4,905
Cavan	New Jobs	534	487
Clare	Total Jobs	3,139	3,255
Clare	New Jobs	562	235
Cork	Total Jobs	22,202	23,955
Cork	New Jobs	2,805	2,712
Donegal	Total Jobs	3,295	3,567
Donegal	New Jobs	223	534
Dublin	Total Jobs	63,251	66,866
Dublin	New Jobs	9,179	8,062
Galway	Total Jobs	6,727	7,278
Galway	New Jobs	712	999
Kerry	Total Jobs	4,449	4,678

	Enterprise Ireland	2014	2015
Kerry	New Jobs	656	556
Kildare	Total Jobs	7,713	8,308
Kildare	New Jobs	1,187	981
Kilkenny	Total Jobs	3,720	3,921
Kilkenny	New Jobs	495	342
Laois	Total Jobs	1,218	1,297
Laois	New Jobs	160	131
Leitrim	Total Jobs	743	820
Leitrim	New Jobs	155	97
Limerick	Total Jobs	6,863	6,777
Limerick	New Jobs	642	485
Longford	Total Jobs	2,461	2,628
Longford	New Jobs	493	267
Louth	Total Jobs	5,431	5,600
Louth	New Jobs	400	566
Mayo	Total Jobs	3,804	3,667
Mayo	New Jobs	383	206
Meath	Total Jobs	6,468	6,855
Meath	New Jobs	776	702
Monaghan	Total Jobs	4,499	4,819
Monaghan	New Jobs	436	467
Offaly	Total Jobs	3,518	3,794
Offaly	New Jobs	356	452
Roscommon	Total Jobs	1,595	1,686
Roscommon	New Jobs	311	180
Sligo	Total Jobs	1,846	1,723
Sligo	New Jobs	145	115
Tipperary	Total Jobs	4,927	5,264
Tipperary	New Jobs	490	518
Waterford	Total Jobs	5,112	5,561
Waterford	New Jobs	890	693
Westmeath	Total Jobs	3,506	3,548
Westmeath	New Jobs	397	229
Wexford	Total Jobs	4,512	4,696
Wexford	New Jobs	381	465
Wicklow	Total Jobs	3,714	3,903
Wicklow	New Jobs	436	403
Total	Total Jobs	182,054	192,223
Total	New Jobs	23,633	21,118

Source: Annual Employment Survey Results 2015

Local Enterprise Offices Data

257. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the level

of local enterprise office supported jobs at 20 June 2015, 31 December 2015 and 30 June 2016, by county, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20010/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): The numbers employed in Local Enterprise Office (LEO) supported businesses stand at 32,592 overall, according to the results of the 2015 LEO annual jobs survey. A total of 7,122 new full- and part-time jobs were created in gross terms in 2015 (7,305 in 2014), details of which are set out in the following table.

The Annual Employment Survey of LEO clients is undertaken towards the end of each year. Accordingly, such data is not available for the 6-month period to 30 June 2015 or 30 Jun 2016.

Table 1: Local Enterprise Office Annual Employment Survey Results 2015

LEO Name	2014 Gross All Job Gains (FT & PT)	2015 Gross All Job Gains (FT & PT)
Carlow	341	267
Cavan	203	223
Clare	486	170
Cork City	227	138
Cork North and West	339	263
Cork South	263	215
Donegal	361	370
Dublin City	615	426
Dublin DLR	237	164
Dublin Fingal	138	197
South Dublin	202	223
Galway	138	183
Kerry	328	396
Kildare	201	222
Kilkenny	263	234
Laois	85	156
Leitrim	162	89
Limerick	327	360
Longford	206	208
Louth	143	82
Mayo	66	168
Meath	262	247
Monaghan	126	153
Offaly	175	144
Roscommon	72	145
Sligo	133	127
Tipperary	240	201
Waterford	348	416
Westmeath	197	309
Wexford	267	326
Wicklow	154	200
Grand Total	7,305	7,122

Taking account of job losses, the net number of jobs created by LEO client companies in 2015 was 3,533 (4,012 in 2014).

Appointments to State Boards

258. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of appointments she has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short-list; the date when the short-list was provided to her; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20069/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): Since my appointment as Minister, one set of Board appointments has fallen for consideration in respect of the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) - where I have made 5 appointments.

In the NSAI, each April, the three longest serving members of the Board tender their resignation. In so doing, they signal to the Chairperson their intention to either retire or seek re-appointment. This year, all three members sought re-appointment and I accepted the recommendation of the NSAI Board Chairperson to re-appoint all three members. In addition, I also appointed Mr Roger Blackburn who was shortlisted among 6 potential appointees following a Public Appointments Service (PAS) campaign. Finally, a fifth appointment was made by me in respect of a change of Departmental representative. These names were presented to me on 2 June 2016 and I signed the Warrants of Appointment for each on 20 June 2016. Details are set out below:

1. Ms Nina Brennan - Department Representative
2. Ms Aideen Goggin - Re-appointment
3. Ms Deirdre O'Hara - Re-appointment
4. Mr Kieran Ryan - Re-appointment
5. Mr Roger Blackburn - Successful Applicant following PAS recruitment campaign.

Finally, the names on any shortlist as a result of a PAS recruitment process are covered by personal confidentiality. In that regard, PAS has advised my Department that members of the public may be very reluctant to engage with the process if their names are subject to disclosure in circumstances where they are not actually selected for appointment.

Farm Safety

259. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of money the Health and Safety Authority spent on farm safety initiatives and the number of inspections it carried out in each of the years 2011 to 2016 to date, in tabular form; her views on the growing number of farm fatalities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20081/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen): Table of Expenditure on Farm Safety Initiatives 2011 to 2015

Year	Expenditure *
2011	€264,481
2012	€589,870
2013	€449,669
2014	€327,953
2015	€396,251

*Note that annual figures for expenditure include some cross sectoral initiatives where the expenditure would also be relevant to other sectors – it is not possible to extract this so it has been included as the full figure. In addition, some of the advertising initiatives would cross years, so the yearly figure is an estimate of the expenditure relevant to that year.

Farm inspections and investigations 2011 – 2016

Year	Number of farm Inspections and Investigations
2011	3,058
2012	3,136
2013	2,784
2014	2,644
2015	3,056
2016 (up to 1/07/16)	1,338

Visits to farms cover routine unannounced inspections to monitor compliance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005, with other health and safety Regulations and to investigate fatal and serious farm accidents. Typically in any one year there would be between 60 – 90 investigations on farms with the rest being unannounced inspections. Each year the HSA carry out a two week intensive farm inspection campaign in April and this year over 500 inspections were carried out. Since 2014 the HSA has redirected some of its inspection resources to engaging directly with farmers on other accident prevention initiatives. HSA inspectors have participated in over 50 farm safety walks and presentations to farmers, many of which are organised by the farming representative bodies. This has enabled HSA to direct its message to over 2000 farmers.

I am particularly concerned at the high level of farm fatalities and it goes without saying that safety in agriculture continues to be a high priority for the Health and Safety Authority and for the Government. The Health and Safety Authority has sought, in consultation with the Farm Safety Partnership - an advisory committee of the Authority that includes representatives from a wide range of key farming stakeholders - to broaden the type of contact with farmers and to find the most effective means to spread the message of prevention within the farming community.

This week I was present at the launch of the Farm Safety Action Plan 2016-18 at the Teagasc Beef 2016 event in Grange, Co Meath. This new Action Plan lays out a series of specific actions and priorities over the next three years for tackling the high rates of illness, injury and death on Irish farms. It sets out six major goals as follows:

- 1). To achieve cultural behavioural change in health and safety of persons working in the agricultural sector through Research, Education and Training.
- 2). To develop programmes which will foster Innovative Approaches and deliver Engineering Solutions to reduce the risks to persons working in Agriculture.
- 3). To reduce the level of death and injury arising from Tractor and Machinery use.

- 4). To establish initiatives to reduce the level of death and injuries arising from working with Livestock.
- 5). To ensure high standards of health and safety are adopted in Forestry and Timber work on farms.
- 6). To implement programmes for the protection of health and wellbeing of persons, including vulnerable groups, working in Agriculture.

I commend the Irish Farmers' Association and the Farm Safety Partnership on their support for the 2016 Farm Safety Week 4 to 8 July. This is the fourth annual Farm Safety Week, an initiative launched in 2013 aiming to cut the toll of accidents which continue to give agriculture the poorest record of any occupation in Ireland. I particularly welcome this joint initiative which brings together the farming organisations from North and South and from the United Kingdom as well as the UK Health & Safety Executive, the Health & Safety Executive for Northern Ireland and the Health & Safety Authority, Ireland.

In November 2015, BeSMART - the free online risk assessment and safety statement tool developed by the Authority - was extended to the agri-business sector, facilitating easy compliance with requirements and raising awareness of a risk based approach to health and safety.

Finally, the advisory and enforcement activity of the Health & Safety Authority complements the suite of programmes developed and implemented by the Department of Agriculture. For example, the Farm Safety Scheme 2014-2015 made over €12 million available in grant-aid to improve the standard of safety on Irish farms for a number of specified investment items.

Public Sector Staff Data

260. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she will provide information on the number of persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds currently working in her Department and in other public service organisations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20439/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): Recruitment to my Department is undertaken principally by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) through competitions advertised publicly, setting out the competencies required for general civil service posts and technical/professional posts as appropriate. The Department is an Equal Opportunities Employer and the PAS operates under relevant Codes of Practice and its Customer Charter in an open and fair manner for all clients and customers.

No data is collated by my Department on the ethnic and cultural background of staff. My Department has a diverse workforce, including some with skills in languages other than English, as reflected, for example, by the commitment in the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) to provide for Inspectors with specific language skills. In this regard, Inspectors were recruited who were proficient in languages including Polish, Lithuanian, Czech and Russian, with some Inspectors proficient in multiple languages. There are currently eight such Inspectors in post.

Foireann Roinne

261. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Post, Fiontar agus Nuálaíochta cén líon státseirbhíseach atá earcaithe le bliain anuas in a Roinn a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu; cén

grád ar a earcaíodh iad; cén líon iomlán státseirbhíseach a earcaíodh i rith an ama sin agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [20447/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): Níl aon phost sainaitheanta ag mo Roinn ina próiseas pleanála fórsa saothair ina bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ina réamhriachtanas. De réir Scéim Teanga 2015-2018, tá mo Roinn tiomanta do mheasúnú a dhéanamh ar bhonn leanúnach ar leibhéal an éilimh ar sheirbhísí trí Ghaeilge lena chinntiú go gcoinníonn sí uirthi ag comhlíonadh an éilimh sin ar bhealach pleanáilte comhtháite inrochtana. Go háirithe, tá gealltanas sa Scéim Teanga reatha go sainaithneofar, faoi dheireadh 2016, aon phost a bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ina bunriachtanas lena aghaidh agus go ndéanfar gach iarracht leis na riachtanais seo a chomhlíonadh faoi dheireadh na scéime agus aird ar bheartais earcaíochta, ardaíthe céime agus oiliúna, de réir mar is cuí.

Ceapadh 60 státseirbhíseach ar fad chun mo Roinne le bliain anuas (15 Oifigeach Cléireachais Shealadacha, a ceapadh le haghaidh tréimhse theoranta, ina measc) trí phróisis earcaíochta na Seirbhíse um Cheapacháin Phoiblí agus, mar atá tugtha le fios agam, ní riachtanas ab ea inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge.

Rinneadh suirbhé foirne in 2012 chun leibhéal an éilimh ar sheirbhísí trí Ghaeilge ón Roinn a fháil amach. Dhearbhaigh torthaí an tsuirbhé sin go raibh an méid cumarsáide i nGaeilge a fuarthas le blianta beaga anuas an-íseal. Léirigh an suirbhé seo freisin gur thug 22% de na baill foirne a ghlac páirt ann le fios go raibh siad in ann gnáthchomhrá a dhéanamh. Thug 34% le fios go raibh siad in ann ciall ghinearálta litreacha agus ríomhphost a thuiscint, agus thug 17% le fios go raibh siad in ann litreacha agus ríomhphoist bhunúsacha a scríobh i nGaeilge.

School Completion Programme

262. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs for clarification on who are the employers of the staff in school completion projects, given the confusion as to whether staff are employed by education and training boards or by local management committees; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19921/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has advised that when the School Completion Programme was established it was envisaged that local management committees would have responsibility for the management of the programme. Over time however a wide variety of arrangements have come into being. Some local management committees employ staff directly and others are limited companies. A number of local management committees have chosen to ensure employment arrangements are carried out on their behalf by other organisations and bodies.

The Agency has confirmed that a recent audit has revealed the diversity of employment and contractual arrangements within the School Completion Programme. Tusla is currently reviewing these arrangements with a view to providing a more cohesive model of employment.

Meanwhile, the Agency has advised that it has put in place arrangements to support local projects with HR, governance and finance issues. These arrangements include an independent HR adviser and a helpline as well as support from Foróige, the national youth development organisation and The Wheel, the support and representative network for the community and voluntary sector in Ireland.

Youth Services

263. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has considered increasing capital expenditure for Scouting Ireland to expand its facilities to cope with ever growing numbers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19926/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services by the voluntary youth sector, to young people throughout the country. The funding schemes support national and local youth work provision to some 380,000 young people. The voluntary youth sector involves approximately 1,400 paid staff, including youth workers and 40,000 volunteers working in youth work services and communities throughout the country. Budget 2016 provided an additional €1.1m in current youth funding to my Department bringing the total allocation for the youth services to €51m in 2016. This additional funding was a 2.5% increase over 2015. It will be used for programmes that target disadvantaged young people and to assist national youth organisations in their work to support local voluntary youth services. Scouting Ireland receives funding under the Youth Service Grant Scheme administered by my Department. In 2016 current funding of €834,606 has been allocated to the organisation. In addition, Scouting Ireland will receive €200,000 under the Dormant Accounts scheme to support its Lelievlet youth employability initiative for young people who are disadvantaged.

Some €2.6m in capital funding, provided in Budget 2016, is also being made available to my Department to support small scale projects, including refurbishment, health and safety fit-outs and accessibility improvements in local voluntary youth services. This year the scheme has been made available to national organisations, such as Scouting Ireland, to assist their work. The applications for capital grants, under the scheme, are currently being processed and I hope to announce details of the successful applicants in the coming weeks.

Youth Services Provision

264. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has considered reviewing the implementation of the Charities Act in voluntary youth services due to the huge burden placed on these services by increasing administration costs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19927/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services by the voluntary youth sector, to young people throughout the country. The funding schemes support 30 national organisations, 477 local projects and provision for some 380,000 young people. In 2016 my Department will administer funding amounting to some €51m to support these youth services.

Funding for local youth services is administered on behalf of my Department in the main by local Education and Training Boards. All applicant organisations for this funding are expected to be fully compliant with legislation in relation to charities, revenue, the Companies Acts and Children First guidelines. My Department works closely with the voluntary youth sector to assist them in meeting these obligations and most importantly in the development of responsive youth services that meet young peoples needs.

Youth Officers in the Education and Training Boards provide support to services in the implementation of the National Quality Standards Framework. Good governance and operational management is an important part of this process for services. The aim is to provide assurance to my Department, the public and young people themselves that resources are being used effectively and that services provided are quality assured and focused on young people.

I, and officials from my Department, regularly meet with national youth organisations and services throughout the country to hear the challenges the voluntary youth sector faces. My aim is to work collaboratively with the youth sector to ensure the provision of youth services that are accessible and are fully accountable to the tax payer and meet high quality standards particularly for vulnerable young people.

Child and Family Agency Staff

265. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is she aware of the Labour Court decision that only allows the employment of public health nurses as Tusla - Child and Family Agency inspectors; if all these public health nurses have the appropriate qualifications to carry out these inspections; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19928/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): TUSLA has responsibility for the inspection of childcare services. Inspection is carried out to monitor compliance with the Child Care (Pre-School) (No 2) Regulations with the aim of ensuring the health, safety and welfare of children enrolled in pre-school services. When the regulations were introduced in 1996, the role of preschool inspector was assigned to public health nurses, whose training and experience gave them a particular expertise in child development. A Labour Court decision allowed for those who hold a public health nursing qualification and are engaged in the task of inspection of early years services to be remunerated at the grade of Assistant Director Public Health Nursing. The Labour Court decision did not address the professional qualifications of the Early Years Inspectors.

The majority of the current cohort of early years inspectors are public health nurses, however, TUSLA has inspectors from other disciplines. It is satisfied that those engaged in the inspection of early years services have both the professional knowledge and experience necessary to carry out their duties. Inspection officers must have five years post qualification experience with children and are qualified to level nine (Masters Level) on the National Qualifications Framework.

I understand that TUSLA intends to recruit additional inspection officers this year and it is observing the appropriate industrial relations consultation protocols with a view to expanding the range of professional backgrounds, which might include Early Years professionals. When agreement is reached TUSLA will invite applications from prospective persons with an appropriate professional qualification.

Early Childhood Care and Education

266. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the securities in place to encourage take-up by providers under the early childhood care and education scheme;; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19929/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My officials contacted Deputy Ó Laoghaire's office and this Parliamentary Question is to be re-submitted.

Child Care Services Regulation

267. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she

has considered reinstating the child minding advisory service and developing a national approach; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19935/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In 2002, the Health Service Executive (HSE) agreed to fund a Childminding Advisory Officer post in each county, who would work with the City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) funded under the Childcare Programme, implemented by the then Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The role included notifying childminders of training opportunities, providing networking opportunities and supporting the CCCs with their work with childminders.

In recent years, HSE funding for the Childminding Advisory Officer posts has gradually decreased, and is no longer in place in the majority of areas. The funding of the 30 CCCs was also reduced as part of expenditure reviews in recent years. However, the CCCs continue to provide valuable services at local level and supporting the childminding sector is an integral part of their work. As a result, childminders continue to have access to some level of support, training and advice.

My Department provides annual funding to each CCC to enable them to support and advise all childcare providers at local level. In 2016, the total amount allocated to the CCCs was €10.4m. In addition, in 2016 my Department provided €250,000 to the CCCs for Childminding Development Grants. My Department also provides annual funding, totalling €2.44m in 2016, to seven National Voluntary Childcare Organisations to provide support at a local level to their members. This included €340,000 for Childminding Ireland (CMI), the representative body for childminders. This national association supports quality development in family based care for children. It supports parents with childcare choices and concerns and also childminders. My Department will soon commence work with Childminding Ireland through a consultative group to inform policy on a programme of supports and reforms for the Childminding Sector.

Under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, services providing care for children who have not yet commenced primary school are required to register their service with the Early Years (Pre-School) Inspectorate in Tusla, and are subject to inspection and report by the Inspectorate on a regular basis. Services covered by the Regulations include full-time, part-time, temporary, overnight, and sessional services, as well as childminders taking care of more than three pre-school children from different families in the childminder's home.

Childminders taking care of not more than three pre-school children from different families are not covered by the Regulations. Decisions on how best to regulate and support the childminding sector will continue to form part of the ongoing work and considerations of officials working on the Early Years Strategy which is due to be finalised by the end of 2016.

Child Care Services

268. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will make arrangements to award a higher capitation grant to a Montessori school (details supplied) for the coming year. [20053/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department will make direct contact with the service provider in question to inform them of the process involved in order to qualify for the higher capitation payment, and assist them with the process.

For a childcare service to be approved for the higher capitation rate in respect of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme in 2015-2016 they were required to satisfy criteria regarding qualifications and ratios, which applied to all ECCE rooms/sessions in the

service. All pre-school leaders had to satisfy the minimum qualification requirements as approved on the published list of my Department's Early Years Recognised Qualifications (level 7 or equivalent) and have at least three years' experience working in the early years sector. All pre-school assistants were required to be qualified to level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Services also had to ensure that they had enough appropriately qualified staff present for each ECCE session to cover the amount of children present at that time.

Following the announcement of the expansion of ECCE in Budget 2016, and the efforts being made by the pre-school sector to provide sufficient additional capacity, my Department decided to make changes to policy to encourage capacity development. From September 2016, the rules regarding qualifying for higher capitation rate are to change, to allow for Higher Capitation to be paid per room in a service, rather than all rooms being required to meet the criteria.

An advisory group convened in 2011 by my Department recommended that only relevant disciplines that meet the criteria for the higher capitation rate under the ECCE programme can be considered. The advisory group advised that working with children in an early childhood care and education setting is a professional role which requires the achievement of core skills and knowledge which include:

- Child Development 0-6 years
- Early Childhood Learning Theory
- Practice and Child Health and Welfare 0-6 years.

If a provider feels that their qualifications meet the required criteria there is a mechanism to submit their full qualifications portfolio to the Department to have them individually assessed. The full qualifications portfolio should be submitted along with the relevant application form to the qualifications recognition section in the Early Years Policies and Programmes Unit in my Department. My Department cannot make a decision regarding higher capitation payment until such a provider submits their qualifications portfolio to be assessed, and the outcome of this assessment is known, or the qualification is on the DCYA Early Years Recognised Qualifications list.

Early Childhood Care and Education

269. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide funding in the form of an early childhood care and education scheme capital grant to a group (details supplied). [20055/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Capital funding of €4 million is being made available through the Early Years Capital Programme in 2016 for early years pre-school services, both private and not-for-profit/community, that are intending to expand their service to provide for more capacity in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. The maximum grant available under this programme is €10,000. The closing date for applications was 8 April, 2016.

Pobal is responsible for the administration of this funding scheme on behalf of my Department. Pobal has conducted the appraisal process and the recommendations of this process for approval of funding, in line with the published criteria, are currently being reviewed by my Department. The award of funding will be based partially on evidence of current need and/or projected future demand for additional ECCE places in 2016/2017 in the catchment area of each applying service. The relevant City/County Childcare Committee have assisted Pobal with

demand versus supply data. Value for money is also an awarding criteria and the costs / grant requested relative to the number of ECCE places being created will be taken into account when evaluating grant applications. Grant agreements will be issued to successful applicants in July 2016. The date by which a service's grant and own funds must be fully spent and reported to Pobal is 31st December 2016.

Since the deadline for receipt of applications under the Early Years Capital programme 2016, Pobal have appraised over 1,000 applications and presented their findings to officials in my Department. These recommendations are now under consideration in the Department and the outcome of these applications will be processed shortly. Operating a grant scheme in such a tight timescale has been a significant challenge, but it was decided to proceed given the urgent needs of childcare providers.

I can confirm that a grant application from the service in question has been received and is currently in the review process. Once the Department has reviewed Pobal's recommendations, decisions will be communicated to providers without delay.

Appointments to State Boards

270. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of appointments she has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago, to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short list; the date when the short list was provided to her; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20061/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am responsible for the appointment of members to the boards of the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Child and Family Agency (Tusla), Gaisce and the Board of Management for the Children Detention Schools.

Since I assumed office in May this year I have made 13 appointments to the new Board of Management for the Children Detention Schools with effect from 1st June 2016. The Board consists of the chairperson and 12 Ordinary members.

I appointed Professor Ursula Kilkelly, School of Law, University College Cork as Chairperson. Professor Kilkelly is the Dean of the School of Law, University College Cork. She is recognised as a leading expert in issues relating to the detention of children and has published widely on youth justice issues.

Of the 12 Ordinary members, the following 7 were appointed on foot of the requirements of section 167 of the Children Act 2001, as follows:

- Mr Jim Gibson - interim Chief Operations Officer of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency was nominated by the Minister for Health;

- Ms Fionnuala Anderson - an Education Officer in Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board was nominated by the Minister for Education and Skills;

- Ms Sinead O'Herlihy and Mr Fiachra Barrett are members of staff on the Oberstown campus who were nominated for appointment on foot of a local balloting process by Oberstown staff in December 2015;

- Mr Pat Rooney and Ms Elizabeth Howard are local community residents in the vicinity of

the Oberstown campus and were nominated by Lusk Community Council, a local Community Group in November 2015;

- Mr Dan Kelleher is a Principal Officer in the Irish Youth Justice Service, Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

I appointed the remaining 5 members of the board on foot of the publication of a notice for expressions of interest on the website *www.stateboards.ie* in January 2016, under the 2014 Guidelines for appointments to State Boards. I made the following 5 appointments from a short-list of 15 suitable candidates notified to my Department by the Public Appointments Service on 18th of February 2016:

- Mr Charles Irwin is an Accountant with the Professional Development Service for Teachers, Dublin

- Mr Diego Gallagher is a solicitor with Byrne Wallace Solicitors, Dublin

- Ms Emer Woodfull is a practicing barrister at the Law Library, Dublin

- Ms Fiona Murphy is a service coordinator with Extern - a charitable organisation which provides services to children assessed as being high risk requiring intensive community based support

- Mr Michael Farrell is Corporate Secretary in University College Cork.

Public Sector Staff Data

271. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide information on the number of persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds currently working in her Department and in other public service organisations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20433/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department does not record information on the numbers of persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds employed by it or in the agencies under its aegis.

My Department currently uses the services of the Public Appointments Service (PAS) for the recruitment of its staff and I am aware that PAS is committed to ensuring that the participation of members of ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, older candidates, members of the Traveller community and others covered by the Employment Equality Acts 1998 - 2015 is encouraged in the selection process.

I have asked my officials to arrange for the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA), the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Ombudsman for Children's Office and the Children Detention Schools to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Foireann Roinne

272. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige cén líon státseirbhíseach atá earcaithe le bliain anuas in a Roinn a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu; cén grád ar ar earcaíodh iad; cén líon iomlán státseirbhíseach a earcaíodh I rith an ama sin agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [20442/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department has recruited 30 civil servants in the last year (excluding temporary clerical officers on short term contracts). None of these posts required a specific competence in the Irish language. My Department is currently filling two positions for which competency in the Irish language is required. Both positions are awaiting allocation of resources via the Public Appointments Service recruitment service.

Appointments to State Boards

273. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of appointments he has made to State boards since the move to the Public Appointments Service two years ago, to date; the names of those appointed and the relevant position on each board; the names of those persons on the short list; the date when the short list was provided to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20063/16]

Taoiseach and Minister for Defence (Deputy Enda Kenny): The only State body currently under the aegis of the Department of Defence is the Army Pensions Board. The Army Pensions Board is an independent statutory body established under the Army Pensions Act 1927. The Act specifies that the Board shall consist of a chairman and two ordinary members. The two ordinary members must be qualified medical practitioners of whom one must be an officer of the Army Medical Corps. The chairman and the non military ordinary member are appointed by the Minister for Defence with the concurrence of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The Army Medical Corps ordinary member is appointed by the Minister for Defence on the recommendation of the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces.

Commandant Adam Lagun was appointed to the position of Army Medical Corps ordinary member of the Board in December 2011. This position became vacant in October 2014 due to Commandant Lagun being deployed overseas. On the recommendation of the Chief of Staff, Commandant Syed Shah was appointed temporarily to the Board, from 16 October 2014 to 31 May 2015, to cover Commandant Lagun's absence. Commandant Lagun resumed as Ordinary member of the Board in June 2015. The position became vacant again in September 2015 with the deployment overseas of Commandant Lagun. On the recommendation of the Chief of Staff, Commandant Zdenek Osecky was appointed temporarily, from 10 September 2015 to 30 June 2016, to cover this temporary vacant position.

On the recommendation of the Chief of Staff, Commandant Lagun was replaced by Commandant Zdenek Osecky in the position of Army Medical Corps ordinary member of the Board in a permanent capacity on 24 June 2016 due to Commandant Lagun's commitment to UNIFIL/ UNDOF for overseas service.

Details of appointments to the Army Pensions Board are published in the Iris Oifigiúil.

Public Sector Staff Data

274. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will provide information on the number of persons of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds currently working in his Department and in other public service organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20434/16]

Taoiseach and Minister for Defence (Deputy Enda Kenny): No information is recorded on the respective Personal Management Systems as to the ethnicity or cultural background of

staff of the Department of Defence or of members of the Defence Forces.

Foireann Roinne

275. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Taoisigh agus Aire Cosanta cén líon státseirbhíseach atá earcaithe le bliain anuas in a Roinn a bhfuil Gaeilge agus Béarla acu; cén grád ar ar earcaíodh iad; cén líon iomlán státseirbhíseach a earcaíodh I rith an ama sin agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [20444/16]

Taoiseach and Minister for Defence (Deputy Enda Kenny): Earcaíodh 19 státseirbhíseach buan sa Roinn Cosanta sa tréimhse 12 mhí go dtí an 30 Meitheamh 2016. Leagtar amach sa tábla thíos mionsonraí faoi ghráid na 19 bpearsanra sin.

Grád	Líon
Príomhoifigeach	2
Comhairleoir Dlí (comhionann le Príomhoifigeach Cúnta)	1
Ardoifigeach Feidhmiúcháin	2
Oifigeach Riaracháin	3
Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin	4
Oifigeach Cléireachais	7

As na 19 bpearsanra a earcaíodh, ba bhaill foirne 11 díobh a aistríodh chuig an Roinn Cosanta ó oifig nó roinn rialtais eile agus b'iontrálaithe nua chuig an Státseirbhís 8 díobh. Chomh maith leis an 19 mball foirne buan a earcaíodh sa tréimhse 12 mhí, earcaíodh 6 pearsanra eile ar feadh tréimhsí sealadacha ó 3 go 12 mhí.

Níl aon phost sa Roinn Cosanta ina gcaithfidh pearsanra inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge a léiriú. Níl mórán caidrimh ag an Roinn leis an bpobal agus mar sin níl mórán éilimh ar sheirbhísí trí mheán na Gaeilge. Mar a fhoráiltear ina Scéimeanna Gaeilge reatha agus roimhe seo, baineann an Roinn úsáid as dream pearsanra a cuireadh le chéile ar bhonn deonach chun cabhrú le Brainsí na Roinne seirbhísí a chur ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge agus chun freagra a thabhairt ar idirghníomhaíocht le custaiméirí más gá.

Tá seisear sa ghrúpa sin faoi láthair atá sásta cabhrú ar bhonn deonach le seirbhísí i nGaeilge a chur ar fáil agus is leor sin chun freastal ar riachtanais ina leith. Déantar athbhreithniú leanúnach ar an ngrúpa deonach seo.

I gcomhthéacs an mhéid sin, agus í ag earcú foirne le bliain anuas, níor shonraigh an Roinn gur gá do bhaill foirne scileanna sonracha a bheith acu i nGaeilge ná i mBéarla.