

## **Written Answers.**

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

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 7, inclusive, answered orally.*

*Questions Nos. 8 to 24, inclusive, resubmitted.*

*Questions Nos. 25 to 31, inclusive answered orally.*

### **Crime Levels**

32. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for County Offaly are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the county; if all Garda stations in County Offaly have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34719/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for Laois/Offaly Garda Division reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for those counties. The Deputy will be aware that in the most recent CSO figures, for Quarter 2 of 2016, there were decreases in many crime categories. This reflects the success of the concerted Garda drive against crime being implemented under Operation Thor and in Laois/Offaly Garda Division the figures show a reduction in Burglary of 32%.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardaí directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intends to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division   | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|------------|--|
| Co. Offaly | Cloghan, Co. Offaly  |
|            | Kilcormac  |
|            | Kinnitty   |
|            | Shinrone   |
|            | Clonbologue  |
|            | Rhode  |

*Questions Nos. 33 to 36, inclusive, answered orally.*

### Crime Levels

37. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for the Dublin northern metropolitan region are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in the Dublin northern metropolitan region have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34731/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for the D.M.R. Northern Garda Division reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that area. The Deputy will be aware that in the most recent CSO figures, for Quarter 2 of 2016, there were decreases in many crime categories. This reflects the success of the concerted Garda drive against crime being implemented under Operation Thor and in the

D.M.R. Northern Garda Division the figures show a reduction in Burglary of 36%.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardai directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intends to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division                  | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|---------------------------|--|
| Dublin North Metropolitan | None   |

*Questions Nos. 38 and 39 answered orally.*

## Road Traffic Offences Data

40. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of cases before each court on speeding offences in 2015 and to date in 2016; the number of convictions of this offence; the number of cases dismissed and struck out; the number of licences recorded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34404/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service. Section 4(3) of the 1998 Act provides that the Courts Service is independent in the performance of its functions, which includes the provision of information on the courts system. However, to be of assistance I have made inquiries with the Courts Service and they have provided the figures requested by the Deputy which I am including by way of a tabular statement. It should be noted that where a summons is struck out not served, the summons can be reissued at the request of An Garda Síochána, so a number of the offences listed as struck out for non-service are likely to have been reissued.

The figures provided by the Courts Service indicate that a significant percentage of cases are struck out for non-service. My officials are seeking clarification from the Courts Service and An Garda Síochána as to the reason for this figure being at this level. It should however be noted in this respect that a working group was established by An Garda Síochána to examine how the rate of summons serving can be improved and to regularly monitor the level of summons service throughout the country. While this group has reported improvements in the rate of successful service of summons, challenges remain in relation to effecting service of summons in certain circumstances, relating to such matters as inaccurate address data, persons moving address, or living in multi-occupancy dwellings or other settings which make service difficult. In addition, certain persons will take steps to evade service. Similar difficulties are experienced by many other police forces.

I would like to thank the Deputy for raising the serious issue of speeding on our roads. The increase in the number of road traffic fatalities in the year to date highlights the need to continue to deploy all effective measures to reduce speeding, and therefore road traffic collisions.

The Deputy will appreciate that road traffic enforcement is an operational matter and, as such, is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner. I am advised that An Garda Síochána's Roads Policing Operations Plan 2016 incorporates a programme of high visibility road safety and enforcement operations, carried out in partnership with other state agencies. The focus of the Roads Policing Operations Plan for 2016 is on the most vulnerable road user categories of motor cyclists, pedal cyclists, pedestrians and learner permit holders. Garda operations specifically target road use behaviour known to contribute significantly to collisions, including speeding. Road traffic legislation is also enforced as part of the day to day duties of members of An Garda Síochána. Both targeted and general methods of enforcement have a valuable role to play in An Garda Síochána's enforcement programme, which targets locations with a view to preventing the commission of offences, detecting errant motorists, changing their behaviour and ultimately reducing death and injuries on our roads.

An Garda Síochána's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 also sets out key strategic objectives for Roads Policing which will inform and guide An Garda Síochána's Road Policing plans over the next 5 years. The Deputy is no doubt aware of the significant investment in Garda resources currently underway. This investment is closely associated with delivery on the Modernisation and Renewal Programme.

In addition, I will be meeting the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport later this month

at the biannual Ministerial Committee on Road Safety, which oversees the implementation of the Road Safety Strategy and provides a forum for high-level discussion of road safety issues.

In so far as the recording of driver licences is concerned, the Courts Service has taken the following steps:

- All summonses issued in respect of alleged offences under the Road Traffic Acts include a specific provision that notifies the person accused of the offence that he/she must bring to the court their driving licence/driving permit and a legible copy of their driving licence or learner permit;

- Court Registrars, following consultation with the presiding Judge, make an announcement in the court to the effect that as required by the summons, persons must produce their driving licence/permit and a copy thereof to the Registrar once their case is called;

- Where a driving licence/learner permit or copy thereof is produced and the accused is convicted of the offence, the Registrar records the driving licence number for the purpose of subsequently transferring the driving licence number to the Department of Transport for the application of penalty points;

- Where a driving licence/learner permit or copy thereof is not produced, the Registrar records this fact on the summons/minute book.

Road safety is of course a shared responsibility and it is incumbent upon us all to play our part by driving within the speed limit.

Table 1 - Report on the Number of Speeding Offences listed for Court between 1 Jan 2015 and 31 December 2015 and related outcomes.

Column A - Displays the number of offences listed

Column B - Displays the number of convictions

Column C - Displays the number of Licences Numbers Recorded

Column D - Number of non convictions

Column E - Total Convictions & Non-Convictions

Column F - Total not finalised Adjudged, Bench Warrants, Appealed, Setasides

Column G - Total Column E (Total convictions & Non convictions) & Column F (Not Finalised, Adjudged, Bench Wts, Appealed, setasides)

|                  | A               | B           | C                        |         |  |            |                       |          | D                     | E                                   | F   | G                  |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------------------|---------|--|------------|-----------------------|----------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Court Area       | Offences Listed | Convictions | No. Of Licences Recorded | Dismiss | Taken into Consideration, Probation, Withdrawn, ETC. | Strike Out | Strike Out Not Served | Poor Box | Total Non Convictions | Total Convictions & Non Convictions | Not Finalised Adjudged, Bench Warrants Appealed Setasides etc | Total Column E & F |
| AN CLOCHAN LIATH | 22              | 4           | 4                        | 1       | 0  | 2          | 14                    | 0        | 17                    | 21                                  | 1   | 22                 |
| AN DAIN-GEAN     | 7               | 1           | 0                        | 2       | 0  | 1          | 3                     | 0        | 6                     | 7                                   | 0   | 7                  |
| AN FAL CAR-RACH  | 17              | 6           | 2                        | 4       | 0  | 1          | 6                     | 0        | 11                    | 17                                  | 0   | 17                 |
| ARDEE            | 142             | 37          | 7                        | 7       | 3  | 31         | 53                    | 0        | 94                    | 131                                 | 11  | 142                |
| ARKLOW           | 288             | 64          | 56                       | 1       | 1  | 86         | 111                   | 0        | 199                   | 263                                 | 25  | 288                |

|                                      | A     | B     | C     |     |     |       |       |     | D     | E     | F   | G     |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| ATHLONE                              | 1,271 | 238   | 163   | 0   | 1   | 347   | 655   | 0   | 1,003 | 1,241 | 30  | 1,271 |
| ATHY                                 | 286   | 88    | 5     | 4   | 20  | 23    | 143   | 0   | 190   | 278   | 8   | 286   |
| BALL<br>AGH<br>ADE<br>RREEN          | 22    | 3     | 1     | 0   | 0   | 4     | 15    | 0   | 19    | 22    | 0   | 22    |
| BALLINA                              | 82    | 4     | 0     | 7   | 17  | 6     | 46    | 0   | 76    | 80    | 2   | 82    |
| BALL-<br>INASLOE                     | 259   | 58    | 26    | 6   | 2   | 45    | 133   | 0   | 186   | 244   | 15  | 259   |
| BALLYSHAN-<br>NON                    | 136   | 32    | 7     | 0   | 0   | 30    | 62    | 8   | 100   | 132   | 4   | 136   |
| BANDON                               | 199   | 41    | 26    | 35  | 1   | 14    | 83    | 11  | 144   | 185   | 14  | 199   |
| BANTRY                               | 51    | 14    | 13    | 5   | 0   | 5     | 21    | 5   | 36    | 50    | 1   | 51    |
| BEAL AN<br>MHUIRHEAD                 | 21    | 2     | 1     | 1   | 1   | 3     | 14    | 0   | 19    | 21    | 0   | 21    |
| BRAY                                 | 566   | 163   | 139   | 5   | 1   | 135   | 197   | 0   | 338   | 501   | 65  | 566   |
| BUNCRANA                             | 153   | 37    | 17    | 35  | 0   | 9     | 69    | 0   | 113   | 150   | 3   | 153   |
| CAHIRCIVEEN                          | 1     |       |       | 0   | 0   | 1     |       | 0   | 1     | 1     | 0   | 1     |
| CARLOW                               | 785   | 215   | 68    | 86  | 18  | 106   | 325   | 23  | 558   | 773   | 12  | 785   |
| CARN-<br>DONAGH                      | 72    | 15    | 3     | 18  | 0   | 7     | 32    | 0   | 57    | 72    | 0   | 72    |
| CARRICK ON<br>SHANNON                | 550   | 71    | 14    | 19  | 0   | 175   | 250   | 21  | 465   | 536   | 14  | 550   |
| CARRICK ON<br>SUIR                   | 21    | 5     | 0     | 0   | 0   | 1     | 13    | 2   | 16    | 21    | 0   | 21    |
| CARRICK-<br>MACROSS                  | 203   | 32    | 17    | 23  | 0   | 19    | 125   | 1   | 168   | 200   | 3   | 203   |
| CASHEL                               | 493   | 103   | 51    | 1   | 6   | 134   | 234   | 4   | 379   | 482   | 11  | 493   |
| CASTLEBAR                            | 266   | 33    | 15    | 29  | 71  | 18    | 103   | 0   | 221   | 254   | 12  | 266   |
| CASTLEREA                            | 76    | 19    | 8     | 0   | 0   | 30    | 27    | 0   | 57    | 76    | 0   | 76    |
| CAVAN                                | 535   | 81    | 30    | 14  | 13  | 98    | 272   | 4   | 401   | 482   | 53  | 535   |
| CLIFDEN                              | 7     | 4     | 0     | 0   | 0   | 3     |       | 0   | 3     | 7     | 0   | 7     |
| CLONAKILTY                           | 8     | 3     | 3     | 0   | 0   | 1     | 4     | 0   | 5     | 8     | 0   | 8     |
| CLONMEL                              | 128   | 32    | 17    | 0   | 19  | 15    | 60    | 0   | 94    | 126   | 2   | 128   |
| CORK CITY                            | 1,460 | 405   | 168   | 6   | 7   | 410   | 558   | 0   | 981   | 1,386 | 74  | 1,460 |
| DOIRE AN<br>FHEICH                   | 307   | 64    | 1     | 0   | 3   | 50    | 185   | 0   | 238   | 302   | 5   | 307   |
| DONEGAL                              | 43    | 3     | 1     | 1   | 0   | 5     | 29    | 2   | 37    | 40    | 3   | 43    |
| DROGHEDA                             | 257   | 66    | 17    | 10  | 4   | 47    | 114   | 0   | 175   | 241   | 16  | 257   |
| DUBLIN MET-<br>ROPOLITAN<br>DISTRICT | 7,471 | 1,820 | 1,023 | 347 | 99  | 1,484 | 3,217 | 107 | 5,254 | 7,074 | 397 | 7,471 |
| DUNDALK                              | 392   | 100   | 19    | 44  | 2   | 87    | 139   | 1   | 273   | 373   | 19  | 392   |
| DUNGARVAN                            | 440   | 107   | 61    | 3   | 0   | 104   | 162   | 53  | 322   | 429   | 11  | 440   |
| ENNIS                                | 887   | 211   | 91    | 40  | 18  | 239   | 347   | 1   | 645   | 856   | 31  | 887   |
| FERMOY                               | 414   | 92    | 32    | 2   | 0   | 53    | 193   | 55  | 303   | 395   | 19  | 414   |
| GALWAY                               | 1,256 | 343   | 93    | 10  | 26  | 257   | 598   | 0   | 891   | 1,234 | 22  | 1,256 |
| GOREY                                | 564   | 190   | 129   | 117 | 4   | 30    | 157   | 1   | 309   | 499   | 65  | 564   |
| GORT                                 | 209   | 39    | 8     | 17  | 0   | 57    | 92    | 0   | 166   | 205   | 4   | 209   |
| KENMARE                              | 1     |       |       | 1   | 0   |       |       | 0   | 1     | 1     | 0   | 1     |
| KILCOCK                              | 376   | 125   | 19    | 1   | 39  | 13    | 191   | 0   | 244   | 369   | 7   | 376   |
| KILKENNY                             | 1,019 | 283   | 102   | 175 | 15  | 113   | 389   | 7   | 699   | 982   | 37  | 1,019 |
| KILLALOE                             | 102   | 23    | 10    | 9   | 0   | 40    | 26    | 0   | 75    | 98    | 4   | 102   |
| KILLARNEY                            | 519   | 42    | 3     | 38  | 31  | 46    | 345   | 2   | 462   | 504   | 15  | 519   |
| KILLORGLIN                           | 1     |       |       | 0   | 0   |       | 1     | 0   | 1     | 1     | 0   | 1     |
| KILRUSH                              | 101   | 19    | 7     | 3   | 0   | 33    | 43    | 0   | 79    | 98    | 3   | 101   |
| LETTER-<br>KENNY                     | 479   | 90    | 42    | 64  | 0   | 60    | 250   | 0   | 374   | 464   | 15  | 479   |
| LIMERICK                             | 1,749 | 272   | 29    | 7   | 252 | 559   | 604   | 0   | 1,422 | 1,694 | 55  | 1,749 |
| LISMORE                              | 36    | 7     | 3     | 0   | 0   | 9     | 10    | 6   | 25    | 32    | 4   | 36    |
| LISTOWEL                             | 241   | 34    | 2     | 34  | 8   | 22    | 136   | 0   | 200   | 234   | 7   | 241   |
| LONGFORD                             | 256   | 71    | 54    | 1   | 0   | 60    | 121   | 0   | 182   | 253   | 3   | 256   |
| LOUGHREA                             | 257   | 62    | 28    | 0   | 0   | 56    | 126   | 1   | 183   | 245   | 12  | 257   |
| MACROOM                              | 608   | 124   | 69    | 80  | 12  | 46    | 282   | 42  | 462   | 586   | 22  | 608   |
| MALLOW                               | 548   | 137   | 28    | 6   | 0   | 91    | 228   | 79  | 404   | 541   | 7   | 548   |



Questions - Written Answers

|                | A     | B   | C   |    |     |     |     |    | D     | E     | F  | G     |
|----------------|-------|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-------|-------|----|-------|
| MANOR HAMILTON | 56    | 2   | 1   | 0  | 0   | 3   | 48  | 2  | 53    | 55    | 1  | 56    |
| MIDDLETON      | 491   | 117 | 41  | 1  | 0   | 113 | 254 | 0  | 368   | 485   | 6  | 491   |
| MONAGHAN       | 315   | 50  | 15  | 24 | 1   | 38  | 196 | 0  | 259   | 309   | 6  | 315   |
| MULLINGAR      | 552   | 181 | 124 | 0  | 3   | 126 | 221 | 4  | 354   | 535   | 17 | 552   |
| NAAS           | 2,005 | 716 | 201 | 12 | 109 | 157 | 937 | 0  | 1,215 | 1,931 | 74 | 2,005 |
| NAVAN          | 511   | 94  | 47  | 23 | 2   | 100 | 268 | 0  | 393   | 487   | 24 | 511   |
| NENAGH         | 553   | 85  | 23  | 91 | 1   | 126 | 236 | 0  | 454   | 539   | 14 | 553   |
| NEWCASTLE WEST | 1,036 | 172 | 17  | 11 | 4   | 230 | 595 | 0  | 840   | 1,012 | 24 | 1,036 |
| PORTLAOISE     | 439   | 101 | 30  | 24 | 1   | 36  | 234 | 31 | 326   | 427   | 12 | 439   |
| ROS COMMON     | 181   | 57  | 26  | 0  | 0   | 41  | 77  | 1  | 119   | 176   | 5  | 181   |
| SKIBBEREEN     | 5     | 2   | 2   | 0  | 0   |     | 3   | 0  | 3     | 5     | 0  | 5     |
| SLIGO          | 829   | 133 | 25  | 3  | 2   | 192 | 401 | 63 | 661   | 794   | 35 | 829   |
| STROKES TOWN   | 167   | 37  | 15  | 0  | 0   | 53  | 73  | 0  | 126   | 163   | 4  | 167   |
| THURLES        | 355   | 52  | 28  | 55 | 1   | 70  | 170 | 0  | 296   | 348   | 7  | 355   |
| TIPPERARY      | 47    | 12  | 4   | 4  | 0   | 18  | 13  | 0  | 35    | 47    | 0  | 47    |
| TRALEE         | 219   | 19  | 6   | 17 | 19  | 21  | 136 | 2  | 195   | 214   | 5  | 219   |
| TRIM           | 236   | 41  | 12  | 17 | 0   | 63  | 110 | 0  | 190   | 231   | 5  | 236   |
| TUAM           | 171   | 49  | 24  | 0  |     |     |     |    |       |       |    |       |

Table 2 - Report on the Number of Speeding Offences listed for Court between 1 Jan 2016 and October 2016 and related outcomes.

Column A - Displays the number of offences listed

Column B - Displays the number of convictions

Column C - Displays the number of Licences Numbers Recorded

Column D - Number of non convictions

Column E - Total Convictions & Non Convictions

Column F - Total not finalised Adjourned, Bench Warrants, Appealed, Setasides

Column G - Total Column E (Total convictions & Non-convictions) & Column F (Not Finalised, Adjourned, Bench Wts, Appealed, setasides)

|                  | A               | B           | C                        |          |                                 |            |                       |          | D                     | E                                   | F   | G                  |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------------------|----------|---------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|----------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Court Area       | Offences Listed | Convictions | No. Of Licences Recorded | Dis-miss | Tic, Probation, Withdrawn, ETC. | Strike Out | Strike Out Not Served | Poor Box | Total Non Convictions | Total Convictions & Non Convictions | Not Finalised Adjourned, Bench Warrants Appealed, Setasides etc | Total Column E & F |
| AN CLOCHAN LIATH | 20              | 5           | 5                        | 3        | 0                               |            | 11                    | 0        | 14                    | 19                                  | 1   | 20                 |
| AN DAIN-GEAN     | 4               |             |                          | 0        | 0                               |            | 3                     | 0        | 3                     | 3                                   | 1   | 4                  |
| AN FAL CAR-RACH  | 4               |             |                          | 0        | 0                               |            | 4                     | 0        | 4                     | 4                                   | 0   | 4                  |
| ARDEE            | 284             | 68          | 21                       | 30       | 0                               | 49         | 103                   | 0        | 182                   | 250                                 | 34  | 284                |
| ARKLOW           | 65              | 11          | 10                       | 0        | 0                               | 20         | 23                    | 0        | 43                    | 54                                  | 11  | 65                 |
| ATHLONE          | 517             | 79          | 49                       | 0        | 2                               | 125        | 302                   | 0        | 429                   | 508                                 | 9   | 517                |
| ATHY             | 110             | 20          | 4                        | 0        | 8                               | 11         | 68                    | 0        | 87                    | 107                                 | 3   | 110                |

|                              | A     | B     | C   |     |     |       |       |    | D     | E     | F   | G     |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|----|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| BALLAGHADERREEN              | 17    | 1     | 1   | 0   | 0   | 3     | 9     | 0  | 12    | 13    | 4   | 17    |
| BALLINA                      | 94    | 7     | 3   | 15  | 13  | 2     | 53    | 0  | 83    | 90    | 4   | 94    |
| BALLINASLOE                  | 268   | 34    | 17  | 8   | 0   | 55    | 147   | 1  | 211   | 245   | 23  | 268   |
| BALLYSHANNON                 | 110   | 16    | 2   | 2   | 0   | 28    | 59    | 0  | 89    | 105   | 5   | 110   |
| BANDON                       | 261   | 28    | 9   | 76  | 6   | 13    | 131   | 3  | 229   | 257   | 4   | 261   |
| BANTRY                       | 16    | 2     | 1   | 3   | 0   |       | 8     | 0  | 11    | 13    | 3   | 16    |
| BEALANMHUIRTHHEAD            | 7     |       |     | 1   | 0   | 1     | 5     | 0  | 7     | 7     | 0   | 7     |
| BRAY                         | 401   | 92    | 72  | 1   | 1   | 105   | 143   | 0  | 250   | 342   | 59  | 401   |
| BUNCRANA                     | 47    | 2     | 0   | 6   | 0   | 1     | 34    | 0  | 41    | 43    | 4   | 47    |
| CARLOW                       | 249   | 39    | 17  | 51  | 1   | 23    | 124   | 0  | 199   | 238   | 11  | 249   |
| CARN-DONAGH                  | 110   | 15    | 8   | 22  | 0   | 7     | 60    | 0  | 89    | 104   | 6   | 110   |
| CARRICK ON SHANNON           | 194   | 20    | 7   | 0   | 0   | 59    | 94    | 0  | 153   | 173   | 21  | 194   |
| CARRICK ON SUIR              | 30    | 6     | 3   | 1   | 0   | 4     | 14    | 2  | 21    | 27    | 3   | 30    |
| CARRICK-MACROSS              | 188   | 32    | 10  | 9   | 1   | 18    | 123   | 0  | 151   | 183   | 5   | 188   |
| CASHEL                       | 237   | 37    | 25  | 0   | 6   | 58    | 127   | 0  | 191   | 228   | 9   | 237   |
| CASTLEBAR                    | 166   | 27    | 2   | 15  | 29  | 8     | 81    | 0  | 133   | 160   | 6   | 166   |
| CASTLEREA                    | 22    | 3     | 0   | 2   | 0   | 3     | 9     | 0  | 14    | 17    | 5   | 22    |
| CAVAN                        | 564   | 119   | 59  | 18  | 19  | 53    | 282   | 0  | 372   | 491   | 73  | 564   |
| CLIFDEN                      | 2     |       |     | 0   | 1   |       | 1     | 0  | 2     | 2     | 0   | 2     |
| CLONAKILTY                   | 4     |       |     | 1   | 0   |       | 1     | 0  | 2     | 2     | 2   | 4     |
| CLONMEL                      | 134   | 24    | 9   | 2   | 7   | 27    | 63    | 2  | 101   | 125   | 9   | 134   |
| CORK CITY                    | 1,096 | 262   | 68  | 26  | 7   | 270   | 499   | 0  | 802   | 1,064 | 32  | 1,096 |
| DOIRE AN FHEICH              | 217   | 35    | 0   | 0   | 1   | 31    | 150   | 0  | 182   | 217   | 0   | 217   |
| DONEGAL                      | 22    | 7     | 4   | 0   | 0   | 3     | 11    | 0  | 14    | 21    | 1   | 22    |
| DROGHEDA                     | 224   | 58    | 22  | 15  | 3   | 45    | 94    | 0  | 157   | 215   | 9   | 224   |
| DUBLIN METROPOLITAN DISTRICT | 6,964 | 1,508 | 861 | 38  | 46  | 1,398 | 3,148 | 35 | 4,665 | 6,173 | 791 | 6,964 |
| DUNDALK                      | 278   | 98    | 39  | 31  | 2   | 47    | 95    | 0  | 175   | 273   | 5   | 278   |
| DUNGARVAN                    | 426   | 64    | 35  | 4   | 2   | 113   | 198   | 44 | 361   | 425   | 1   | 426   |
| ENNIS                        | 630   | 85    | 39  | 21  | 81  | 90    | 337   | 0  | 529   | 614   | 16  | 630   |
| FERMOY                       | 333   | 67    | 21  | 3   | 2   | 93    | 151   | 0  | 249   | 316   | 17  | 333   |
| GALWAY                       | 847   | 240   | 60  | 7   | 16  | 165   | 406   | 1  | 595   | 835   | 12  | 847   |
| GOREY                        | 586   | 125   | 85  | 113 | 1   | 77    | 183   | 0  | 374   | 499   | 87  | 586   |
| GORT                         | 111   | 14    | 1   | 6   | 0   | 29    | 59    | 0  | 94    | 108   | 3   | 111   |
| KILCOCK                      | 191   | 51    | 8   | 1   | 13  | 8     | 105   | 0  | 127   | 178   | 13  | 191   |
| KILKENNY                     | 1,016 | 212   | 97  | 181 | 22  | 104   | 483   | 0  | 790   | 1,002 | 14  | 1,016 |
| KILLALOE                     | 43    | 9     | 4   | 1   | 6   | 8     | 15    | 0  | 30    | 39    | 4   | 43    |
| KILLARNEY                    | 391   | 52    | 2   | 17  | 13  | 89    | 213   | 0  | 332   | 384   | 7   | 391   |
| KILLORGLIN                   | 2     |       |     | 0   | 1   | 1     |       | 0  | 2     | 2     | 0   | 2     |
| KILRUSH                      | 25    | 7     | 5   | 0   | 4   | 3     | 11    | 0  | 18    | 25    | 0   | 25    |
| LETTERKENNY                  | 295   | 62    | 13  | 54  | 0   | 44    | 120   | 0  | 218   | 280   | 15  | 295   |
| LIMERICK                     | 1,794 | 273   | 19  | 3   | 199 | 495   | 757   | 0  | 1,454 | 1,727 | 67  | 1,794 |
| LISMORE                      | 40    | 8     | 6   | 1   | 0   | 12    | 15    | 2  | 30    | 38    | 2   | 40    |
| LISTOWEL                     | 224   | 24    | 3   | 21  | 16  | 37    | 123   | 0  | 197   | 221   | 3   | 224   |
| LONGFORD                     | 244   | 48    | 32  | 0   | 0   | 61    | 122   | 0  | 183   | 231   | 13  | 244   |
| LOUGHREA                     | 250   | 54    | 25  | 9   | 0   | 41    | 129   | 5  | 184   | 238   | 12  | 250   |
| MACROOM                      | 283   | 34    | 21  | 35  | 5   | 30    | 157   | 3  | 230   | 264   | 19  | 283   |
| MALLOW                       | 354   | 73    | 19  | 5   | 1   | 124   | 142   | 0  | 272   | 345   | 9   | 354   |
| MANORHAMILTON                | 43    |       |     | 0   | 1   | 6     | 36    | 0  | 43    | 43    | 0   | 43    |
| MEATH                        | 390   | 100   | 58  | 16  | 1   | 32    | 197   | 0  | 246   | 346   | 44  | 390   |



Questions - Written Answers

|                | A      | B     | C     |       |     |       |        |     | D      | E      | F     | G      |
|----------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|--------|-----|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| MIDDLE TON     | 358    | 68    | 21    | 0     | 1   | 85    | 198    | 0   | 284    | 352    | 6     | 358    |
| MONAGHAN       | 170    | 35    | 16    | 19    | 0   | 16    | 91     | 0   | 126    | 161    | 9     | 170    |
| MULLINGAR      | 355    | 94    | 51    | 0     | 0   | 80    | 171    | 0   | 251    | 345    | 10    | 355    |
| NAAS           | 1,752  | 449   | 88    | 14    | 85  | 132   | 958    | 0   | 1,189  | 1,638  | 114   | 1,752  |
| NAVAN          | 139    | 40    | 21    | 25    | 0   | 20    | 47     | 0   | 92     | 132    | 7     | 139    |
| NENAGH         | 537    | 90    | 15    | 26    | 0   | 166   | 241    | 0   | 433    | 523    | 14    | 537    |
| NEWCASTLE WEST | 1,107  | 174   | 14    | 0     | 0   | 331   | 546    | 0   | 877    | 1,051  | 56    | 1,107  |
| PORTLAOISE     | 414    | 58    | 20    | 11    | 2   | 61    | 270    | 1   | 345    | 403    | 11    | 414    |
| ROSCOMMON      | 89     | 14    | 6     | 4     | 1   | 17    | 33     | 0   | 55     | 69     | 20    | 89     |
| SKIBBEREEN     | 1      |       |       | 0     | 0   |       | 1      | 0   | 1      | 1      | 0     | 1      |
| SLIGO          | 543    | 75    | 17    | 3     | 0   | 160   | 279    | 0   | 442    | 517    | 26    | 543    |
| STROKES TOWN   | 38     | 5     | 4     | 0     | 0   | 10    | 22     | 0   | 32     | 37     | 1     | 38     |
| THURLES        | 360    | 47    | 17    | 19    | 0   | 64    | 213    | 0   | 296    | 343    | 17    | 360    |
| TIPPERARY      | 28     | 6     | 0     | 2     | 1   | 4     | 12     | 1   | 20     | 26     | 2     | 28     |
| TRALEE         | 125    | 14    | 1     | 14    | 9   | 24    | 60     | 0   | 107    | 121    | 4     | 125    |
| TRIM           | 7      | 3     | 1     | 0     | 0   |       | 4      | 0   | 4      | 7      | 0     | 7      |
| TUAM           | 129    | 34    | 20    | 7     | 1   | 23    | 55     | 3   | 89     | 123    | 6     | 129    |
| TUBBERCURRY    | 72     | 12    | 5     | 0     | 0   | 22    | 35     | 0   | 57     | 69     | 3     | 72     |
| TULLAMORE      | 186    | 52    | 25    | 7     | 0   | 35    | 89     | 0   | 131    | 183    | 3     | 186    |
| VIRGINIA       | 144    | 34    | 15    | 4     | 1   | 26    | 55     | 0   | 86     | 120    | 24    | 144    |
| WATERFORD CITY | 611    | 88    | 26    | 1     | 1   | 239   | 255    | 0   | 496    | 584    | 27    | 611    |
| WESTPORT       | 11     |       |       | 0     | 0   |       | 7      | 0   | 7      | 7      | 4     | 11     |
| WEXFORD        | 440    | 102   | 73    | 100   | 0   | 43    | 158    | 0   | 301    | 403    | 37    | 440    |
| WICKLOW        | 307    | 74    | 64    | 1     | 0   | 79    | 109    | 0   | 189    | 263    | 44    | 307    |
| YOUGHAL        | 37     | 10    | 6     | 3     | 0   | 4     | 17     | 1   | 25     | 35     | 2     | 37     |
| TOTAL          | 29,404 | 5,835 | 2,407 | 1,134 | 639 | 5,770 | 13,964 | 104 | 21,611 | 27,446 | 1,958 | 29,404 |

### Garda Deployment

41. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in Cork city on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to Cork city; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34695/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime and the Deputy will be aware that in the most recent CSO figures, for Quarter 2 of 2016, there were decreases in many crime categories, including for example a 26% reduction in burglaries. This reflects the success of the concerted Garda drive against crime being implemented under Operation Thor. It is important we build on this success by ensuring that Garda numbers continue to increase. The Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide-ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous

pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 12 have been assigned to the Cork City Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November, which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attested Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister, has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016-2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Cork City Division, like all other Garda Divisions, will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Cork City Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| Cork City Division 31 Oct 2010 |                   |     |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----|
| ANGLESEA STREET DISTRICT       | ANGLESEA STREET   | 281 |
|                                | BARRACK STREET    | 21  |
|                                | BLACKROCK         | 30  |
|                                | BRIDEWELL         | 21  |
|                                | Total             | 353 |
| GURRANABRAHER DISTRICT         | BALLINCOLLIG      | 22  |
|                                | BLARNEY           | 17  |
|                                | GURRANABRAHER     | 60  |
|                                | RATHDUFF GRENAGH  | 2   |
|                                | Total             | 101 |
| MAYFIELD DISTRICT              | MALLOW ROAD       | 5   |
|                                | MAYFIELD          | 59  |
|                                | MC CURTAIN STREET | 0   |
|                                | WATERCOURSE ROAD  | 48  |
|                                | Total             | 112 |

Questions - Written Answers

| Cork City Division 31 Oct 2010 |              |     |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-----|
| TOGHER DISTRICT                | BISHOPSTOWN  | 23  |
|                                | CARRIGALINE  | 21  |
|                                | CROSSHAVEN   | 3   |
|                                | DOUGLAS      | 28  |
|                                | PASSAGE WEST | 4   |
|                                | TOGHER       | 59  |
|                                | Total        | 138 |
| CORK CITY DIVISION             | 18 Stations  | 704 |

| Cork City Division 30 Sept 2016 |                  |     |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----|
| ANGLESEA STREET DISTRICT        | ANGLESEA STREET  | 277 |
|                                 | BLACKROCK        | 25  |
|                                 | BRIDEWELL        | 27  |
|                                 | TOTAL            | 329 |
| GURRANABRAHER DISTRICT          | BALLINCOLLIG     | 20  |
|                                 | BLARNEY          | 18  |
|                                 | CARRIG NA BHFEAR | 1   |
|                                 | GURRANABRAHER    | 52  |
|                                 | TOTAL            | 91  |
| MAYFIELD DISTRICT               | GLANMIRE         | 19  |
|                                 | MAYFIELD         | 51  |
|                                 | WATERCOURSE ROAD | 45  |
|                                 | TOTAL            | 115 |
| TOGHER DISTRICT                 | BISHOPSTOWN      | 21  |
|                                 | CARRIGALINE      | 20  |
|                                 | CROSSHAVEN       | 2   |
|                                 | DOUGLAS          | 20  |
|                                 | PASSAGE WEST     | 2   |
|                                 | TOGHER           | 48  |
|                                 | TOTAL            | 113 |
| CORK CITY DIVISION              | 16 Stations      | 648 |

**Estimates Publication**

42. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality when her Department will publish a Revised Estimate for 2017; her Department's projection for additional costs arising for the Garda budget; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34836/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, following intensive negotiations between the Government, the Garda Representative Association (GRA) and Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission, the Labour Court issued a recommendation on 3 November last in relation to the dispute. In the case of individual members, the recommendation for the GRA and AGSI would provide extra remuneration of around €4,000 on average to a member of the Service over the next 12 months through:

- an increase in the value of the rent allowance by €500 bringing it to €4,655 per annum with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the integration of the rent allowance in the new amount of €4,655 into salary with consequential increases in unsocial hours and overtime payments also with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the introduction of a €15 premium payment per annual leave day to compensate for the uncertainty attaching to the taking of leave by Gardaí. This payment will be worth €510 per annum to a Garda with 34 days annual leave; and

- the implementation of a long-standing recommendation of the Garda Inspectorate through the introduction of paid 15 minute pre-tour briefing or tasking sessions with effect from 1 January 2017.

Under the Labour Court recommendation, new recruits who do not currently receive rent allowance, will have it restored, in addition to the other improvements I just listed. In addition, the increment freeze in place for GRA members since 1 July will be lifted and any arrears arising from increments foregone will be paid.

The Government has also made it clear that it is committed to introducing legislative change to give the Garda Associations the right of access to the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court.

On foot of the Labour Court recommendation, the GRA and AGSI agreed to defer the intended industrial action over the course of the four Fridays in November to facilitate a ballot of their membership. This was a very welcome decision by the Garda Associations and has ensured that a full policing service remains in place.

The Government fully respects the decision of the Labour Court as the independent industrial relations body of last resort in the State and agreed last week to accept its recommendation. The outcome of the process is now being examined in detail by all sides and it is hoped that it will form the basis for a final resolution of this dispute following the balloting of members of AGSI and the GRA in due course.

The independent recommendation of the Labour Court seeks to address the concerns that have been articulated by the representative bodies in relation to their pay and conditions, including that of new recruits, and their access to the statutory dispute resolution bodies. The nature of the Labour Court's recommendation is such that some of the cost of the implementation of the proposals, if they are accepted by the members of AGSI and the GRA, depend on the amount of overtime worked in any year. That said, I am advised that, depending on a number of variables, the estimated gross annual cost of implementing the Labour Court Recommendation could exceed €50m; however, this gross cost will be offset by statutory deductions for tax, PRSI, etc., which will reduce the net Exchequer cost.

Once the outcome of the ballots is known and if the proposals are accepted, the additional budgetary cost will be the subject of discussions between my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. In that regard officials of both Departments have had an initial discussion on the issues. The question of the publication of revised Estimates is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

What is most important at this juncture is that members of AGSI and the GRA are afforded the time and space to give the Labour Court's recommendation the detailed consideration that it deserves.

## **Crime Levels**

43. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for County Kerry are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in County Kerry have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34685/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for Kerry Garda Division reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that area. The Deputy will be aware that in the most recent CSO figures, for Quarter 2 of 2016, there were decreases in many crime categories. This reflects the success of the concerted Garda drive against crime being implemented under Operation Thor and in the Kerry Garda Division the figures show a reduction in Burglary of 32%.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardai directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intends to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division  | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|-----------|--|
| Co. Kerry | None   |
|           | Castlegregory  |
|           | Annascaul  |
|           | Baile an Fheirtéaraigh   |
|           | Glenbeigh  |
|           | Portmagee  |
|           | Castlemaine  |
|           | Barraduff  |
|           | Ballyduff  |
|           | Knocknagoshel  |
|           | Lixnaw   |

### Domestic Violence

44. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the measures she will bring forward to tackle domestic violence; the supports her Department provides towards domestic violence refuges; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34658/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Domestic violence is a social evil and the protection of members of society from domestic violence remains a priority for me and my Department. Drafting of the Domestic Violence Bill is at an advanced stage. It is my intention that the Bill will be submitted for Government approval and published during the current Dáil session. The Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021 was published by me in January. A multi-annual action plan to enable ratification of the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention is part of the action plan of the second national strategy. The Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Bill is also being drafted for publication as a priority.

The Deputy may also wish to note I recently announced the awarding of contracts for a national awareness campaign as part of the Second National Strategy. The campaign will be launched tomorrow and it is intended that it will run for a period of 6 years up to 2021, subject to the continued availability of the necessary funding. The overall aim of the campaign is to increase the awareness of domestic and sexual violence, to bring about a change in long established societal behaviours and attitudes and to activate bystanders with the aim of decreasing and preventing this violence. It will recognise that women and men are victims of such crimes.

The Deputy will be aware that Tusla, the Child and Family Agency is the primary funder for refuges and that this a matter for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. I understand however that funding for the domestic violence sector in 2016 by Tusla was in the region of €16.5 million.



**Protected Disclosures**

45. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the actions she has taken in her current role to ensure that members of An Garda Síochána that have made protected disclosures have not been subjected to bullying or intimidation as a result of making such disclosures; if her attention has been drawn to any such allegations of bullying or harassment; if she is satisfied that the Garda Commissioner and senior Garda management have put adequate steps in place to safeguard against this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34851/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As I have advised the Deputy previously, there has been significant change in the procedures for members of the Gardaí who wish to report allegations of wrongdoing.

The Protected Disclosures 2014 Act was part of the then Government's comprehensive approach to enhancing the protections available to whistleblowers, including members of the Garda Síochána. Under the Act, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) is now the prescribed body authorised to receive protected disclosures on Garda matters.

Accordingly, members of the Garda Síochána may communicate their concerns to the Garda Commissioner, as their employer if they so choose, or they may make a disclosure directly to GSOC. Where a protected disclosure is made to GSOC, the Act provides that GSOC may, if it appears to it desirable in the public interest to do so, investigate the disclosure.

It is important to recognise the very significant fact that a member of the Gardaí who makes a disclosure in accordance with the Act is entitled to all the protections provided for whistleblowers in the Act. These protections include protection from having their identity revealed, protection from dismissal and protection from being penalised in their employment as a result of having made a protected disclosure.

The Deputy is no doubt aware of the measures that the Garda Commissioner outlined at her meeting last June with the Policing Authority. The Garda Síochána has published its Protected Disclosures Policy and all Garda members and civilians have been informed of this policy. In addition the Garda Commissioner has appointed a Protected Disclosures Manager who will be supported with a dedicated and properly trained team. The Garda Síochána has been working with Transparency International Ireland and other external providers to create an environment to ensure that whistleblowers are protected and supported.

In light of the public interest in An Garda Síochána having robust policies and procedures in place to support and protect whistleblowers and to ensure that their complaints or allegations are fully investigated, I signalled during the Dáil debate on the O'Higgins Report that I would refer certain matters to the independent Policing Authority. To that end, I wrote to the Authority on 2 June 2016 requesting that in accordance with section 62O(6) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 (as amended) they submit a report on the policies and procedures in place in An Garda Síochána to deal with whistleblowers/whistleblowing. I also asked that they make any recommendations that they consider appropriate in order to ensure that the policies and procedures in place are appropriate and can provide assurance that whistleblowers can make complaints or allegations in a safe environment where their complaints or allegations are properly investigated.

The Policing Authority has completed its review and reported to me last week. The Report was published on my Department's website on Friday and has been laid before both Houses in accordance with the Act. The Report contains a number of recommendations almost all of which have been accepted by the Commissioner and I understand that a revised version of the



Policy will be published by the Commissioner shortly. The Commissioner is committed to providing an environment in which protected disclosures can be made in full knowledge that persons making such disclosures will be supported and protected in the workplace.

All of this points to significant changes in the regime for making protected disclosures by members of the Gardaí and the significant protections afforded to those who make protected disclosures.

I am aware of a number of instances where there have been allegations that individuals have been subjected to bullying and harassment. I would again make the point that all of us in this House must be very careful in discussing individual cases of whistleblowing. Protection for whistleblowers rightly prioritises the confidentiality of the process, which is central to the efficacy of the process, so I do not propose to discuss individual cases.

The Garda Commissioner has assured me that she is committed to providing a positive and supportive working environment for all Garda personnel. An Garda Síochána's Dignity at Work Policy, entitled "Working Together to Create a Positive Working Environment", outlines the policy and procedures for dealing with Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace. The main objective of the policy is to achieve a safe and harmonious working environment that encourages and supports the right to dignity at work. I am informed that the Commissioner has established an internal Garda Working Group to review the current practice and policies in place in An Garda Síochána and this work is currently ongoing.

### **Garda Recruitment**

46. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of new gardaí that will be trained in 2017; the number of new entrants planned per class in 2017; if there has been any changes to her previous announced plans; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34750/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime and the Deputy will be aware that in the most recent CSO figures, for Quarter 2 of 2016, there were decreases in many crime categories, including for example a 26% reduction in burglaries. This reflects the success of the concerted Garda drive against crime being implemented under Operation Thor. It is important we build on this success by ensuring that Garda numbers continue to increase. The Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide-ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response. The existing recruitment campaign (launched last November) is ongoing and successful candidates will continue to be called from that campaign this year and into next year. It is expected that successful candidates from the

new campaign will enter the Garda College from mid-2017.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that there will be four intakes of 200 trainee Garda in 2017 scheduled for 13 February, 2 May, 8 August and 6 November giving a total intake of 800 trainee Garda.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November. I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that another 900 trainee Garda are scheduled to attest in 2017 which when taking account of projected retirements will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,500 mark by year end.

### **Crime Levels**

47. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for County Louth are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in County Louth have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34671/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for Louth Garda Division reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that area. The Deputy will be aware that in the most recent CSO figures, for Quarter 2 of 2016, there were decreases in many crime categories. This reflects the success of the concerted Garda drive against crime being implemented under Operation Thor and in Louth Garda Division the figures show a reduction in Burglary of 24%.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardaí directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Division | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
| Louth    | None   |

### Court Sitings

48. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she has had discussions in respect of vacancies and backlogs in the Court of Appeal in the context of the programme for Government; and if the Government has plans to address delays in the administration of justice here, particularly in the Court of Appeal. [33528/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Deputy will be aware that the scheduling of court cases and the allocation of court business is a matter for the respective Presidents of the courts and the presiding judge who are, under the Constitution, independent in the exercise of their judicial functions. The Presidents monitor waiting times across all court lists and seek to ensure the optimum use of court time. Available resources and operational and organisational structures in the Courts Service are kept under ongoing review to ensure that resources are targeted and every effort is made to ensure waiting times are kept to a minimum.

In regard to the Court of Appeal, I am informed that the current waiting time for criminal appeals is between 4 and 5 months from lodgement of the written submissions of the appellant compared to 15 months waiting time in the Court of Criminal Appeal prior to the establishment of the Court of Appeal. The current waiting time for civil appeals is 15 - 17 months compared with a delay of up to 48 months in the Supreme Court in late 2014.

The President of the Court of Appeal initiated a more focussed and time-efficient case-management approach to new civil appeals in October this year so that the issues to be decided on appeal are clearly identified in an effort to alleviate pressures on waiting times.

There are currently no vacancies in the Court of Appeal. The matter of resources in the Court of Appeal, taking into account its current workload including the substantial inherited backlog and bearing in mind resources across the courts, is currently being examined.

## **Compensation Schemes**

49. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of outstanding issues regarding the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal; if it is sitting; the number of appeals waiting to be heard; and if vacancies have been filled. [34822/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal, which has responsibility for the administration of the Scheme of Compensation for Personal Injuries Criminally Inflicted and the Scheme of Compensation for Personal Injuries Criminally Inflicted on Prison Officers, is independent in the matter of applications under the Scheme. However, to be of assistance to the Deputy I have had enquiries made of the Tribunal.

The Tribunal is comprised of a Chairperson and six Ordinary Members. Tribunal Members, who are practising barristers and practising solicitors in the Courts system, provide their services on a part-time basis to the Tribunal. There are currently no vacancies to be filled.

I am informed that there are 147 appeals awaiting hearing and the Tribunal is currently preparing an extensive schedule of appeal hearings for the first half of 2017. I am informed that the Tribunal has commenced writing to applicants and/or their legal representatives informing them of their appeal hearing dates. Any applicants not offered an appeal date during the first half of 2017 will be contacted by the Tribunal as soon as possible.

## **Departmental Funding**

50. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her priorities for 2017 in respect of persons with disabilities; the funding being provided for all disability programmes in 2017 and specifically the funding to be provided for the National Disability Authority; and if none of this proposed funding will be reduced to accommodate pressures elsewhere in her Department's Voted Estimates. [34833/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Department of Justice and Equality has a policy coordination role in relation to disability, but does not have responsibility in relation to funding of disability services. Within that policy coordination role, my priorities for 2017 are as follows:

1. Ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Work is underway on drawing up an Equality/Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill to progress miscellaneous legislative amendments necessary to proceed to ratification. It is intended that the Bill will address issues such as the Convention's requirements in relation to reasonable accommodation and deprivation of liberty, as well as removing archaic references in existing legislation relating to mental health. The General Scheme of the Equality/Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill is available on the Department's website. It is expected that the Bill will be published shortly so as to facilitate ratification of the Convention by end-2016.

2. Implementation of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) for People with Disabilities: The role of the Department of Justice and Equality in relation to the CES is to monitor progress and ensure that the Strategy is implemented. A key priority for 2017 is to progress the increase in the statutory public service employment target of people with disabilities on a phased basis as set out in the Strategy from 3% to 6% over the life time of the Strategy. Work will begin on this in early 2017.

3. The commencement and implementation of the new National Disability Inclusion Strategy: I expect to be in a position shortly to finalise the new National Disability Inclusion Strategy, and present it at Cabinet for sign-off, so as to facilitate the publication of the Strategy by end-2016.

4. Funding: In so far as the Department of Justice and Equality is concerned, there is an annual budget allocation of €250,000 for the provision of disability awareness grants. The 2017 allocation for the National Disability Authority is €3.804m. There are no proposals to reduce this funding to meet commitments elsewhere.

### **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

51. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34834/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Interdepartmental Committee on the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was reconvened in September 2014, and met four times to identify all barriers to Ireland's ratification of the Convention and agree on legislative measures to overcome them. The result of this work was a roadmap to ratification, which was published on 21 October 2015 and which outlines the considerable legislative changes to be undertaken to enable Ireland to ratify the Convention, along with the estimated deadline of end-2016 for ratification. The Roadmap to Ratification, which is available on my Department's website, sets out the substantial legislative agenda required for ratification. Since publication of the Roadmap, work has continued on a bilateral basis between my Department and the other relevant Departments to progress each of the specific issues identified.

Considerable progress has already been made to overcome barriers to Ireland's ratification. The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 was signed into law on 30 December 2015 and is a comprehensive reform of the law on decision-making capacity. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015 commenced its second stage reading in the Dáil on 5 October. When enacted, the Bill will reform Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 to facilitate the full participation in family life of persons with intellectual disabilities and the full expression of their human rights. Achieving the necessary balance between those rights and ensuring appropriate protection is crucial.

Work is underway on drawing up an Equality/Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill to progress miscellaneous legislative amendments necessary to proceed to ratification. It is intended that the Bill will address issues such as the Convention's requirements in relation to reasonable accommodation and deprivation of liberty, as well as removing archaic references in existing legislation relating to mental health. The General Scheme of the Equality/Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill is available on the Department's website. I expect to publish the Bill shortly so as to facilitate ratification of the Convention by end-2016.

### **Garda Deployment**

52. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in County Offaly on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to County Offaly; and if she will make a statement on the matter.



[34720/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime and the Deputy will be aware that in the most recent CSO figures, for Quarter 2 of 2016, there were decreases in many crime categories, including for example a 26% reduction in burglaries. This reflects the success of the concerted Garda drive against crime being implemented under Operation Thor. It is important we build on this success by ensuring that Garda numbers continue to increase. The Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. Co. Offaly is part of the Laois/Offaly Garda Division and I am informed that of the 534 newly attested Gardaí, 24 have been assigned to the Laois/Offaly Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Laois/Offaly Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Laois/Offaly Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| LAOIS/OFFALY DIVISION 31 OCT 2016 |                  |               |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Division                          | Stations         | Garda Numbers |
| ABBEYLEIX                         | ABBEYLEIX        | 28            |
|                                   | ARLES            | 2             |
|                                   | BALLACOLLA       | 1             |
|                                   | BALLINAKILL      | 1             |
|                                   | BALLYLINAN       | 4             |
|                                   | BORRIS-IN-OSSORY | 1             |
|                                   | DURROW           | 2             |
|                                   | RATHDOWNEY       | 4             |
|                                   | TOTAL            | 43            |
| BIRR                              | BANAGHER         | 5             |
|                                   | BIRR             | 29            |
|                                   | CLOGHAN          | 1             |
|                                   | FERBANE          | 5             |
|                                   | KILCORMAC        | 2             |
|                                   | KINNITTY         | 1             |
|                                   | SHANNONBRIDGE    | 1             |
|                                   | SHINRONE         | 2             |
|                                   | TOTAL            | 46            |
| PORTLAOISE                        | CLONASLEE        | 2             |
|                                   | MOUNTMELICK      | 7             |
|                                   | MOUNTRATH        | 4             |
|                                   | PORTARLINGTON    | 14            |
|                                   | PORTLAOISE       | 114           |
|                                   | STRADBALLY       | 2             |
|                                   | TOTAL            | 143           |
| TULLAMORE                         | CLARA            | 5             |
|                                   | CLONBOLOGUE      | 0             |
|                                   | DAINGEAN         | 2             |
|                                   | EDENDERRY        | 13            |
|                                   | GEASHILL         | 0             |
|                                   | RHODE            | 2             |
|                                   | TULLAMORE        | 80            |
|                                   | Total            | 102           |
| LAOIS/OFFALY                      | 29 Stations      | 334           |

| LAOIS/OFFALY DIVISION 30 SEP 2016 |           |               |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Division                          | Stations  | Garda Numbers |
| BIRR                              | BANAGHER  | 5             |
|                                   | BIRR      | 28            |
|                                   | CLOGHAN   | 1             |
|                                   | FERBANE   | 4             |
|                                   | KILCORMAC | 2             |
|                                   | KINNITTY  | 1             |



| LAOIS/OFFALY DIVISION 30 SEP 2016 |                  |     |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----|
|                                   | SHINRONE         | 1   |
|                                   | TOTAL            | 42  |
| PORTLAOISE                        | ABBEYLEIX        | 20  |
|                                   | ARLES            | 1   |
|                                   | BALLYLINAN       | 2   |
|                                   | BORRIS-IN-OSSORY | 1   |
|                                   | CLONASLEE        | 1   |
|                                   | DURROW           | 1   |
|                                   | MOUNTMELICK      | 6   |
|                                   | MOUNTRATH        | 3   |
|                                   | PORTARLINGTON    | 13  |
|                                   | PORTLAOISE       | 107 |
|                                   | RATHDOWNEY       | 2   |
|                                   | STRADBALLY       | 2   |
|                                   | TOTAL            | 159 |
| TULLAMORE                         | CLARA            | 4   |
|                                   | DAINGEAN         | 2   |
|                                   | EDENDERRY        | 13  |
|                                   | RHODE            | 1   |
|                                   | TULLAMORE        | 73  |
|                                   | TOTAL            | 93  |
| LAOIS/OFFALY                      | 24 Stations      | 294 |

### Crime Levels

53. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for north Cork are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in north Cork have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34688/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for north Cork reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that area.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its

correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardaí directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division   | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|------------|--|
| North Cork | Ballynoe   |
|            | Kildorrery   |
|            | Kilworth   |
|            | Glantaine  |
|            | Liscarroll   |
|            | Cloyne   |
|            | Ballycotton  |

### Garda Deployment

54. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in County Mayo on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to County Mayo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34728/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country

in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 5 have been assigned to the Mayo Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Mayo Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Mayo Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| MAYO DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |             |               |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Division                  | Stations    | Garda Numbers |
| BALLINA                   | BALLINA     | 50            |
|                           | BALLYCASTLE | 1             |
|                           | BONNICONLON | 1             |
|                           | CROSSMOLINA | 4             |

| MAYO DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |                     |     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-----|
|                           | KILLALA             | 1   |
|                           | LAHARDANE           | 1   |
|                           | TOTAL               | 58  |
| BELMULLET                 | BALLYCROY           | 1   |
|                           | BANGOR ERRIS        | 3   |
|                           | BELLACORICK         | 1   |
|                           | BELMULLET           | 19  |
|                           | BLACKSOD            | 1   |
|                           | GLENAMOY            | 1   |
|                           | TOTAL               | 26  |
| CASTLEBAR                 | BALLA               | 2   |
|                           | BALLYGLASS          | 1   |
|                           | BALLYVARY           | 1   |
|                           | CASTLEBAR           | 76  |
|                           | GARDA INFO SERVICES | 3   |
|                           | GLENISLAND          | 0   |
|                           | PARTRY              | 2   |
|                           | TOURMAKEADY         | 1   |
| CASTLEBAR                 | TOTAL               | 86  |
|                           | BALLINDINE          | 1   |
|                           | BALLINROBE          | 9   |
|                           | CLAREMORRIS         | 37  |
|                           | CONG                | 1   |
|                           | HOLLYMOUNT          | 1   |
|                           | KILMAINE            | 0   |
|                           | KNOCK               | 2   |
|                           | SHRULE              | 1   |
| CLAREMORRIS               | TOTAL               | 52  |
|                           | BALLYHAUNIS         | 10  |
|                           | CHARLESTOWN         | 7   |
|                           | FOXFORD             | 3   |
|                           | KILKELLY            | 9   |
|                           | KILTIMAGH           | 3   |
|                           | SWINFORD            | 28  |
|                           | TOTAL               | 60  |
| WESTPORT                  | ACHILL SOUND        | 3   |
|                           | KEEL                | 0   |
|                           | LOUISBURGH          | 2   |
|                           | MULRANNY            | 1   |
|                           | NEWPORT             | 3   |
|                           | WESTPORT            | 30  |
|                           | TOTAL               | 39  |
| Total                     | 40 Stations         | 321 |

Questions - Written Answers

| MAYO DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 |                    |               |   |
|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------|---|
| Division                   | Stations           | Garda Numbers |   |
| BALLINA                    | BALLINA            | 48            |   |
|                            | BONNICONLON        | 1             |   |
|                            | CROSSMOLINA        | 5             |   |
|                            | FOXFORD            | 2             |   |
|                            | KILLALA            | 2             |   |
|                            | TOTAL              | 58            |   |
| BELMULLET                  | BALLYCROY          | 1             |   |
|                            | BANGOR ERRIS       | 2             |   |
|                            | BÉAL AN MHUIRTHEAD | 25            |   |
|                            | GLEANN NA MUAIDHE  | 1             |   |
|                            | TOTAL              | 29            |   |
| CASTLEBAR                  | BALLA              | 2             |   |
|                            | CASTLEBAR          | 75            |   |
|                            | PARTRY             | 2             |   |
|                            | TOTAL              | 79            |   |
| CLAREMORRIS                | BALLINDINE         | 1             |   |
|                            | BALLINROBE         | 7             |   |
|                            | BALLYHAUNIS        | 9             |   |
|                            | CHARLESTOWN        | 5             |   |
|                            | CLAREMORRIS        | 36            |   |
|                            | CONG               | 1             |   |
|                            | KILKELLY           | 5             |   |
|                            | KILMAINE           | 2             |   |
|                            | KILTIMAGH          | 1             |   |
|                            | KNOCK              | 1             |   |
|                            | SHRULE             | 1             |   |
|                            | SWINFORD           | 22            |   |
|                            | TOTAL              | 91            |   |
|                            | WESTPORT           | ACHILL SOUND  | 5 |
|                            |                    | KEEL          | 1 |
| LOUISBURGH                 |                    | 2             |   |
| NEWPORT                    |                    | 3             |   |
| WESTPORT                   |                    | 31            |   |
| TOTAL                      | 42                 |               |   |
| MAYO                       | 29 Stations        | 299           |   |

### Crime Levels

55. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she is satisfied with the accuracy of reported crime statistics; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34835/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and these

reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardaí directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

### **Brexit Issues**

56. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the discussions that have taken place with the United Kingdom Government with regard to the control of non-European Union immigration post Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34657/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** It has always been the case that Ireland and the United Kingdom cooperate closely on immigration matters, in particular as they relate to securing the Common Travel Area (CTA) and we will continue to cooperate, and to strengthen that cooperation, in the future. Both Governments have publicly declared their commitment to ensuring no return to a so-called 'hard border' on the island of Ireland. There are excellent relations at official and political level in relation to enhancing the operation of the Common Travel Area and we are committed to that continuing.

In that regard, a central feature of the operation of the CTA has been that each State enforces

the other's conditions of landing for non-EEA nationals, thus protecting each other's borders. In addition, cooperation extends across a number of other areas including the sharing of information and at an operational level on enforcement. For example, on the information front, earlier this year new arrangements to allow for the sharing of Advanced Passenger Information between Ireland and the UK in order to further enhance the integrity of the Common Travel Area were introduced. The development of the British-Irish Visa System was facilitated by this arrangement and indeed could not have happened without the electronic sharing of information such as biometrics.

The practical impact of BREXIT on the operation of the CTA, including in respect of Non-EEA nationals, is being considered between officials of the Department and the UK Home Office, including at meetings of the Common Travel Area Forum jointly chaired by the Director General of the INIS and his UK counterpart.

### **Garda Remuneration**

57. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the areas from which in her annual budget she proposes to find the proposed cost of the Labour Court decision on Garda pay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34747/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, following intensive negotiations between the Government, the Garda Representative Association (GRA) and Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission, the Labour Court issued a recommendation on 3 November last in relation to the dispute. In the case of individual members, the recommendation for the GRA and AGSI would provide extra remuneration of around €4,000 on average to a member of the Service over the next 12 months through:

- an increase in the value of the rent allowance by €500 bringing it to €4,655 per annum with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the integration of the rent allowance in the new amount of €4,655 into salary with consequential increases in unsocial hours and overtime payments also with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the introduction of a €15 premium payment per annual leave day to compensate for the uncertainty attaching to the taking of leave by Gardaí. This payment will be worth €510 per annum to a Garda with 34 days annual leave;

- the implementation of a long-standing recommendation of the Garda Inspectorate through the introduction of paid 15 minute pre-tour briefing or tasking sessions with effect from 1 January 2017.

Under the Labour Court recommendation, new recruits who do not currently receive rent allowance, will have it restored, in addition to the other improvements I just listed. In addition, the increment freeze in place for GRA members since 1 July will be lifted and any arrears arising from increments foregone will be paid.

The Government has also made it clear that it is committed to introducing legislative change to give the Garda Associations the right of access to the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court.

On foot of the Labour Court recommendation, the GRA and AGSI agreed to defer the in-



tended industrial action over the course of the four Fridays in November to facilitate a ballot of their membership. This was a very welcome decision by the Garda associations and has ensured that a full policing service remains in place.

The Government fully respects the decision of the Labour Court as the independent industrial relations body of last resort in the State and agreed last week to accept its recommendation. The outcome of the process is now being examined in detail by all sides and it is hoped that it will form the basis for a final resolution of this dispute following the balloting of members of AGSI and the GRA in due course.

The independent recommendation of the Labour Court seeks to address the concerns that have been articulated by the representative bodies in relation to their pay and conditions including of new recruits, and their access to the statutory dispute resolution bodies. The nature of the Labour Court's recommendation is such that some of the cost of the implementation of the proposals, if they are accepted by the members of AGSI and the GRA, depend on the amount of overtime worked in any year. That said, I am advised that, depending on a number of variables, the estimated gross annual cost of implementing the Labour Court Recommendation could exceed €50m; however, this gross cost will be offset by statutory deductions for tax, PRSI, etc., which will reduce the net Exchequer cost.

Once the outcome of the ballots is known and if the proposals are accepted, the additional budgetary cost will be the subject of discussions between my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

What is most important at this juncture is that members of AGSI and the GRA are afforded the time and space to give the Labour Court's recommendation the detailed consideration that it deserves.

### **Prisoner Data**

58. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which habitual offenders are facilitated with early release; the number of such offenders released prior to the completion of their sentence in 2016 to date; if any, all or none of such prisoners were offered or received educational or rehabilitative training while in prison; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34830/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As previously advised to the Deputy, I am informed by the Irish Prison Service that they do not collate information in the format requested by the Deputy.

I can advise the Deputy that provisional figures for 2016 show a total of 7,171 prisoners were granted Full or Reviewable Temporary Release in the period 1 January 2016 to 10 November 2016. A significant number of these, 6,434, were persons imprisoned for very short periods for non-payment of fines, who were granted early release shortly thereafter. The Irish Prison Service publishes figures in relation to the number of prisoners currently on temporary release on their website *www.irishprisons.ie* on a daily basis.

Each application for Temporary Release is considered on its individual merits and a number of factors are taken into account when making a decision on whether to grant temporary release including the nature of the offence, whether or not the person is a first-time offender, and whether the person poses a threat to public safety.

The Irish Prison Service Recidivism study for 2010 shows that 2,561 persons out of a total

of 9,339 that were released in that year went on to re-offend within the first 6 months of release. As well as offences committed after expiration of sentence, this figure also includes offences committed before their official release date and this would take account of crimes committed while on early release, day release, and compassionate release. It also includes offences committed while in custody such as assaults and possession of mobile phones.

These figures were produced in partnership with the Central Statistics Office using a combination of Garda Síochána and Irish Prison Service records, based on the Irish Crime Classification System. The study, which was published on 10 November 2016, looked at the available data up to the end of 2013 to take account of the time to make a conviction and a broader 3 year analysis of recidivism.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that literacy supports form an important element of the prison education curriculum. The literacy curriculum concentrates on the needs of the individual and aims to improve self-esteem and build confidence.

All prisoners who come into the Education Centre of each prison have an individual interview to assess their educational attainments, needs and interests. Those with literacy difficulties are identified at this stage and are prioritised for support. Such prisoners are asked to undertake the Adult Basic Education test to assess their literacy levels.

The Irish Prison Service is currently exploring the feasibility of surveying the prison population using the 8 key competences for lifelong learning as defined by the European Commission. These include literacy and language competence along with mathematical and digital competence. Expressions of Interest have been sought from Irish Universities to enter into a research partnership with the Irish Prison Service to undertake this survey.

I can inform the Deputy that the education service in Irish Prisons devotes considerable resources to the provision of basic literacy education for persons in custody. In conjunction with this professional service the Irish Prison Service facilitates a peer led basic literacy service amongst persons in custody called “Toe by Toe” where those with poor literacy and/or learning difficulties are mentored by individual volunteers who are also persons in custody but who receive specific training in this regard. The Department of Education & Skills on a partnership basis provides the Irish Prison Service with 220 whole time equivalent teaching posts. I am informed by officials in the Irish Prison Service that many of these educators have completed modular courses in dyslexia, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), adult literacy etc, and frequently work with students in prison on a one-to-one basis.

### **Direct Provision System**

59. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the progress she has made in changing the direct provision system for asylum seekers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34738/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Report of the Working Group on Improvements to the protection process including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers provides a template for the development and improvement of a wide range of services being delivered to those seeking international protection.

One of the key recommendations of the Report was the introduction of a single application procedure in the protection process. The International Protection Act 2015 provides for such a procedure. My Department is currently preparing all of the steps necessary to commence the Act which responds to some 26 of the Working Group’s recommendations and can be expected

to positively address the crucial issue of the length of time that applicants spend in the protection process and by extension in State provided accommodation.

On this particular point, significant efforts have been made to deal with those who are longest in the system and at this stage the vast majority of those who are over 5 years in the system and who do not have any impediments to progress, such as pending judicial challenges, have now had their cases processed to completion. This has been a key achievement that has had a real impact on many people and families in the protection process.

A transition Task Force was established in 2015 and put in place important supports to facilitate people with status moving into and integrating with the community. The Task Force reported that 87% of people granted status had moved into the wider community within six months.

Tangible progress in improving the daily lives of asylum seekers living in State provided accommodation while their application is being processed is also being made. In January last, the former Tánaiste announced an increase to the Direct Provision Allowance for children, the first such increase since the introduction of the payment some sixteen years ago. Prescription fees for all those in receipt of the Direct Provision allowance, including children, have also been waived. The Minister for Education and Skills has also announced a second year of their pilot support scheme for students in the protection system for the academic year 2016/2017.

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department, which is responsible for the management and administration of accommodation and ancillary services to protection applicants in state provided accommodation, is actively progressing the implementation of other recommendations in the Report around access to cooking facilities and the increase in living space for those who avail of State provided accommodation. Pilot projects are being undertaken in a number of centres to ensure the best approach to realising these objectives and ensuring that those residing in the direct provision system continue to be treated with respect and dignity.

RIA are also working on the development of standards for the provision and maintenance of services in accommodation centres, enhancing the complaints mechanisms for residents of those centres and the provision of ongoing diversity and equality training and awareness programmes across all centres.

## **Garda Deployment**

60. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in County Wicklow on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to County Wicklow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34710/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some

3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 10 have been assigned to the Wicklow Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Wicklow Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Wicklow Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| WICKLOW DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |             |               |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Division                     | Stations    | Garda Numbers |
| BALTINGLASS                  | BALTINGLASS | 39            |
|                              | BLESSINGTON | 17            |
|                              | CARNEW      | 4             |
|                              | DONARD      | 1             |
|                              | DUNLAVIN    | 2             |
|                              | HOLLYWOOD   | 1             |
|                              | SHILLELAGH  | 1             |
|                              | TINAHELY    | 2             |
|                              | TOTAL       | 67            |
|                              | BRAY        | BRAY          |
| ENNISKERRY                   |             | 6             |
| GREYSTONES                   |             | 37            |

| WICKLOW DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |                          |     |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----|
|                              | NEWTOWNMOUNTKEN-<br>NEDY | 3   |
|                              | TOTAL                    | 182 |
| WICKLOW                      | ARKLOW                   | 37  |
|                              | ASHFORD                  | 12  |
|                              | AUGHRIM                  | 2   |
|                              | AVOCA                    | 3   |
|                              | RATHDRUM                 | 5   |
|                              | ROUNDWOOD                | 4   |
|                              | WICKLOW                  | 48  |
|                              | TOTAL                    | 111 |
| WICKLOW                      | 19 Stations              | 360 |

| WICKLOW DIVISION 30 SEP 2016 |                          |               |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Division                     | Stations                 | Garda Numbers |
| BALTINGLASS                  | BALTINGLASS              | 34            |
|                              | BLESSINGTON              | 23            |
|                              | CARNEW                   | 4             |
|                              | DUNLAVIN                 | 2             |
|                              | SHILLELAGH               | 1             |
|                              | TINAHELY                 | 2             |
|                              | TOTAL                    | 66            |
| BRAY                         | BRAY                     | 114           |
|                              | ENNISKERRY               | 2             |
|                              | GREYSTONES               | 25            |
|                              | NEWTOWNMOUNTKEN-<br>NEDY | 3             |
|                              | TOTAL                    | 144           |
| WICKLOW                      | ARKLOW                   | 34            |
|                              | ASHFORD                  | 3             |
|                              | AUGHRIM                  | 1             |
|                              | AVOCA                    | 1             |
|                              | RATHDRUM                 | 4             |
|                              | ROUNDWOOD                | 3             |
|                              | WICKLOW                  | 48            |
|                              | TOTAL                    | 94            |
| WICKLOW                      | 17 Stations              | 304           |

### Crime Levels

61. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for counties Roscommon and Longford are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in counties Roscommon and Longford have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34675/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for counties Roscommon and Longford reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for those counties.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardaí directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Division           | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
| Roscommon/Longford | Drumlish   |



| Division | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|----------|--|
|          | Kenagh   |
|          | Smear  |
|          | Athleague  |
|          | Clonark  |
|          | Frenchpark   |
|          | Keadue   |
|          | Tulsk  |
|          | Ballinlough  |

### Garda Deployment

62. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in west Cork on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to west Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34692/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 5 have been assigned to the West Cork Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.



*Questions - Written Answers*

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the West Cork Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the West Cork Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| CORK WEST DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |                |               |
|--------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Division                       | Stations       | Garda Numbers |
| BANDON DISTRICT                | BALLINEEN      | 2             |
|                                | BALLINHASSIG   | 2             |
|                                | BALLINSPIITTE  | 0             |
|                                | BALLYFEARD     | 1             |
|                                | BANDON         | 84            |
|                                | INNISHANNON    | 1             |
|                                | KILBRITTAIN    | 1             |
|                                | KINSALE        | 16            |
|                                | TIMOLEAGUE     | 1             |
|                                | TOTAL          | 108           |
| BANTRY DISTRICT                | ADRIGOLE       | 1             |
|                                | BALLYDEHOB     | 1             |
|                                | BANTRY         | 36            |
|                                | CASTLETOWNBERE | 4             |
|                                | DRIMOLEAGUE    | 1             |
|                                | DURRUS         | 1             |
|                                | GLENGARRIFF    | 1             |
|                                | GOLEEN         | 1             |
|                                | KEALKIL        | 0             |
|                                | SCHULL         | 4             |
| TOTAL                          | 50             |               |
| CLONAKILTY DISTRICT            | BALLYGURTEEN   | 0             |
|                                | BALTIMORE      | 1             |
|                                | CASTLETOWNSEND | 1             |
|                                | CLONAKILTY     | 28            |
|                                | DRINAGH        | 1             |
|                                | DUNMANWAY      | 8             |
|                                | ROSSCARBERY    | 2             |
|                                | SKIBBEREEN     | 10            |
| TOTAL                          | 51             |               |
| KANTURK DISTRICT               | BALLYDESMOND   | 0             |

| CORK WEST DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |              |     |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-----|
|                                | BOHERBUE     | 1   |
|                                | KANTURK      | 33  |
|                                | KNOCKNAGREE  | 1   |
|                                | MEELIN       | 1   |
|                                | MILLSTREET   | 12  |
|                                | NEWMARKET    | 3   |
|                                | RATHMORE     | 1   |
|                                | TOTAL        | 52  |
| MACROOM DISTRICT               | BALLINGEARY  | 1   |
|                                | BALLYVOURNEY | 3   |
|                                | COACHFORD    | 2   |
|                                | CROOKSTOWN   | 6   |
|                                | INCHIGEELA   | 1   |
|                                | MACROOM      | 42  |
|                                | STUAKE       | 1   |
|                                | TARELTON     | 1   |
|                                | Total        | 57  |
| CORK WEST TOTAL                | 43 Stations  | 318 |

| CORK WEST DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 |                |               |
|---------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Division                        | Stations       | Garda Numbers |
| BANDON DISTRICT                 | BALLINEEN      | 2             |
|                                 | BALLINHASSIG   | 2             |
|                                 | BANDON         | 79            |
|                                 | INNISHANNON    | 1             |
|                                 | KILBRITTAIN    | 1             |
|                                 | KINSALE        | 15            |
|                                 | TIMOLEAGUE     | 1             |
|                                 | TOTAL          | 101           |
| BANTRY DISTRICT                 | BANTRY         | 33            |
|                                 | CASTLETOWNBERE | 5             |
|                                 | DRIMOLEAGUE    | 1             |
|                                 | DURRUS         | 1             |
|                                 | GLENGARRIFF    | 1             |
|                                 | KEALKIL        | 1             |
|                                 | SCHULL         | 4             |
|                                 | TOTAL          | 46            |
| CLONAKILTY DISTRICT             | BALTIMORE      | 1             |
|                                 | CLONAKILTY     | 34            |
|                                 | DRINAGH        | 1             |
|                                 | DUNMANWAY      | 11            |
|                                 | ROSSCARBERY    | 1             |
|                                 | SKIBBEREEN     | 12            |
|                                 | TOTAL          | 60            |

| CORK WEST DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 |                            |     |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-----|
| MACROOM DISTRICT                | BAILE BHUIRNE              | 2   |
|                                 | BÉAL ÁTHA AN GHA-<br>ORTHA | 2   |
|                                 | COACHFORD                  | 1   |
|                                 | CROOKSTOWN                 | 10  |
|                                 | MACROOM                    | 38  |
|                                 | MILLSTREET                 | 14  |
|                                 | RATHMORE                   | 1   |
|                                 | STUAKE                     | 1   |
|                                 | TARELTON                   | 1   |
|                                 | TOTAL                      | 70  |
| CORK WEST TOTAL                 | 29 Stations                | 277 |

### Crime Levels

63. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for County Laois are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in County Laois have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34721/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for County Laois reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that county.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardaí directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division  | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|-----------|--|
| Co. Laois | Clonaslee  |
|           | Durrow   |
|           | Arles  |
|           | Borris-In-Ossory   |

### Protected Disclosures

64. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the actions taken by her over the past two years to ensure that gardaí who had made protected disclosures were not subjected to bullying and harassment; if she is satisfied with the outcome of those actions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34558/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As I have advised the Deputy previously, there has been significant change in the procedures for members of the Gardaí who wish to report allegations of wrongdoing.

The Protected Disclosures 2014 Act was part of the then Government's comprehensive approach to enhancing the protections available to whistleblowers, including members of the Garda Síochána. Under the Act, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) is now the prescribed body authorised to receive protected disclosures on Garda matters.

Accordingly, members of the Garda Síochána may communicate their concerns to the Garda Commissioner, as their employer if they so choose, or they may make a disclosure directly to GSOC. Where a protected disclosure is made to GSOC, the Act provides that GSOC may, if it appears to it desirable in the public interest to do so, investigate the disclosure.

It is important to recognise the very significant fact that a member of the Gardaí who makes a disclosure in accordance with the Act is entitled to all the protections provided for whistleblowers in the Act. These protections include protection from having their identity revealed, protection from dismissal and protection from being penalised in their employment as a result

of having made a protected disclosure.

The Deputy is no doubt aware of the measures that the Garda Commissioner outlined at her meeting last June with the Policing Authority. The Garda Síochána have published their Protected Disclosures Policy and all Garda Members and civilians have been informed of this policy. In addition the Garda Commissioner has appointed a Protected Disclosures Manager who will be supported with a dedicated and properly trained team. The Garda Síochána have been working with Transparency International Ireland and other external providers to create an environment to ensure that whistleblowers are protected and supported.

In light of the public interest in An Garda Síochána having robust policies and procedures in place to support and protect whistleblowers and to ensure that their complaints or allegations are fully investigated, I signalled during the Dáil debate on the O'Higgins Report that I would refer certain matters to the independent Policing Authority. To that end, I wrote to the Authority on 2 June 2016 requesting that in accordance with section 62O(6) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 (as amended) they submit a report on the policies and procedures in place in An Garda Síochána to deal with whistleblowers/whistleblowing. I also asked that they make any recommendations that they consider appropriate in order to ensure that the policies and procedures in place are appropriate and can provide assurance that whistleblowers can make complaints or allegations in a safe environment where their complaints or allegations are properly investigated.

The Policing Authority has completed its review and reported to me last week. The Report was published on my Department's website on Friday and has been laid before both Houses in accordance with the Act. The Report contains a number of recommendations almost all of which have been accepted by the Commissioner and I understand that a revised version of the Policy will be published by the Commissioner shortly. The Commissioner is committed to providing an environment in which protected disclosures can be made in full knowledge that persons making such disclosures will be supported and protected in the workplace.

All of this points to significant changes in the regime for making protected disclosures by members of the Gardaí and the significant protections afforded to those who make protected disclosures.

The Garda Commissioner has assured me that she is committed to providing a positive and supportive working environment for all Garda personnel. An Garda Síochána's Dignity at Work Policy, entitled "Working Together to Create a Positive Working Environment", outlines the policy and procedures for dealing with Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace. The main objective of the policy is to achieve a safe and harmonious working environment that encourages and supports the right to dignity at work. I am informed that the Commissioner has established an internal Garda Working Group to review the current practice and policies in place in An Garda Síochána and this work is currently ongoing.

### **Traveller Community**

65. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the reason she has not introduced legislation to provide legal recognition of the Traveller community as an ethnic group in law. [34826/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** As the Deputy will be already be aware, there is a comprehensive consultation process underway, led by my Department, to develop a new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy to improve the situation for the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. Phase 1 (identifica-

tion of key themes for the new Strategy) and Phase 2 (identification and agreement of high level objectives under each agreed theme) of that consultation process have been completed. The final phase, Phase 3 (identification of detailed actions to achieve each agreed objective, with associated time-scales, key performance indicators, institutional responsibilities and monitoring arrangements), is currently underway. This process will provide a new set of specific, cross-Departmental actions that need to be taken to bring about a real improvement in quality of life for Travellers and Roma. It is intended that the new Inclusion Strategy will run from 2016 to 2020 and that it will be in place later this year. As part of Phase 3, regional public consultations took place from 22 September 2016 - 27 September 2016; I attended two of those consultations (in Dublin and in Athlone, respectively) and I am delighted to report that overall attendance and participation were encouraging and positive. Feedback from those consultation sessions is being collated by my officials and the draft Inclusion Strategy will be updated accordingly. I plan to submit the final draft of the Inclusion Strategy to Government shortly for consideration and sign-off.

The issue of recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group is being considered in the context of the development of the Inclusion Strategy. In September 2015, my predecessor brought a paper to Cabinet Committee on Social Policy on the question of recognising Travellers as a distinct ethnic group within Irish society. This followed a process of dialogue with the national-level Traveller NGOs during 2015, which culminated in the presentation of an agreed position paper by them and confirmation that there are no legal or legislative or expenditure implications arising from such recognition. As such, there are no plans to introduce new legislation in this regard. The key benefit is that recognition of the distinct heritage, culture and identity of Travellers and their special place in Irish society would be hugely symbolically important to Traveller pride, to Traveller self-esteem and to overcoming the legacy of marginalisation and discrimination that the community has experienced. Such a symbolic gesture – as the Traveller NGO paper argues – creates a new platform for positive engagement by the Traveller community and Government together in seeking sustainable solutions based on respect and honest dialogue.

I have had a long standing interest in this area, most notably through my chairing of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality when it produced its report on the Recognition of Traveller Ethnicity (April 2014). When I spoke earlier this year at the Traveller Pride awards, I stressed that we need to broaden the discussion on this issue. The debate needs to be taken forward in an inclusive way. My officials and I are currently working to advance this issue with national Traveller organisations in this regard.

### **Victim Support Services**

**66. Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if her attention was drawn to a recent documentary (details supplied); when the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Bill will be enacted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34749/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am aware of the documentary referred to by the Deputy which highlighted some of the difficulties encountered by many victims, and victims of sexual offences in particular, in the course of criminal proceedings.

The Government approved the General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Bill in July 2015. This landmark new Bill will introduce for the first time statutory rights for victims of crime. The Bill is being drafted as a priority and I expect to publish it during the current Dáil session.



The Bill will transpose into Irish law Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime fulfilling a commitment in the Programme for Government to enact legislation to strengthen the rights of victims of crime and their families.

At an operational level, arrangements have been put in place to ensure that rights conferred by the Directive are provided to crime victims both within existing legislation and on a non-statutory basis. In practical terms this has meant that most of the rights conferred by the Directive are currently being made available for victims.

### **Garda Deployment**

67. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in the Dublin western metropolitan region on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to the Dublin western metropolitan region; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34736/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 50 have been assigned to the DMR West Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the DMR West Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the DMR West Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| D.M.R. WEST 30 SEPT 2016 |                |               |
|--------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Division                 | Stations       | Garda Numbers |
| BLANCHARDSTOWN           | BLANCHARDSTOWN | 147           |
|                          | CABRA          | 61            |
|                          | FINGLAS        | 106           |
|                          | TOTAL          | 314           |
| CLONDALKIN               | BALLYFERMOT    | 83            |
|                          | CLONDALKIN     | 92            |
|                          | RATHCOOLE      | 20            |
|                          | TOTAL          | 195           |
| LUCAN                    | LUCAN          | 73            |
|                          | RONANSTOWN     | 89            |
|                          | TOTAL          | 162           |
| D.M.R. WEST              | 8 Stations     | 671           |

| D.M.R. WEST 31 OCT 2010 |                |               |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Division                | Stations       | Garda Numbers |
| BLANCHARDSTOWN          | BLANCHARDSTOWN | 197           |
|                         | CABRA          | 70            |
|                         | FINGLAS        | 124           |
|                         | Total          | 391           |
| CLONDALKIN              | BALLYFERMOT    | 100           |
|                         | CLONDALKIN     | 97            |
|                         | RATHCOOLE      | 29            |
|                         | Total          | 226           |
| LUCAN                   | LUCAN          | 82            |
|                         | RONANSTOWN     | 95            |
|                         | Total          | 177           |
| Total                   | 8 Stations     | 794           |

### Garda Deployment

68. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in County Kildare on 31 October

2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34716/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 25 have been assigned to the Kildare Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Kildare Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Kildare Division on the 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| KILDARE DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |                   |               |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Division                     | Stations          | Garda Numbers |
| KILDARE                      | ATHY              | 28            |
|                              | BALLYTORE         | 2             |
|                              | CASTLEDERMOT      | 3             |
|                              | KILDARE           | 34            |
|                              | MONASTEREVIN      | 4             |
|                              | NEWBRIDGE         | 45            |
|                              | RATHANGAN         | 4             |
|                              | TOTAL             | 120           |
| LEIXLIP                      | CARBURY           | 4             |
|                              | CELBRIDGE         | 20            |
|                              | KILCOCK           | 8             |
|                              | LEIXLIP           | 35            |
|                              | MAYNOOTH          | 16            |
|                              | TOTAL             | 83            |
| NAAS                         | BALLYMORE EUSTACE | 1             |
|                              | CLANE             | 11            |
|                              | KILCULLEN         | 2             |
|                              | KILL              | 4             |
|                              | NAAS              | 102           |
|                              | ROBERTSTOWN       | 5             |
|                              | TOTAL             | 125           |
| KILDARE                      | 18 Stations       | 328           |

| KILDARE DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 |              |               |
|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Division                      | Stations     | Garda Numbers |
| KILDARE                       | ATHY         | 27            |
|                               | CASTLEDERMOT | 4             |
|                               | KILDARE      | 33            |
|                               | MONASTEREVIN | 4             |
|                               | NEWBRIDGE    | 48            |
|                               | RATHANGAN    | 3             |
|                               | TOTAL        | 119           |
| LEIXLIP                       | CARBURY      | 7             |
|                               | CELBRIDGE    | 11            |
|                               | KILCOCK      | 9             |
|                               | LEIXLIP      | 37            |
|                               | MAYNOOTH     | 14            |
|                               | TOTAL        | 78            |
| NAAS                          | CLANE        | 7             |
|                               | KILCULLEN    | 2             |
|                               | NAAS         | 98            |
|                               | ROBERTSTOWN  | 3             |
|                               | TOTAL        | 110           |

|                               |             |     |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-----|
| KILDARE DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 |             |     |
| KILDARE                       | 15 Stations | 307 |

### Crime Levels

69. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for County Wexford are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in County Wexford have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34702/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for County Wexford reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that county.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardaí directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division    | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|-------------|--|
| Co. Wexford | Taghmon  |
|             | Castlebridge   |
|             | Kilmore Quay   |
|             | Glynn  |
|             | Blackwater   |
|             | Clonroche  |
|             | Carrick-on-Bannow  |
|             | Carrickbyrne   |

### Judicial Council

70. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality when a judicial council will be established; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34838/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** It will come as no surprise to the Deputy when I say that, like its predecessors, this Government is firmly of the view that it is necessary to put in place a structure to deal with allegations of judicial misconduct which fall below the level which might warrant invoking Article 35.4 of the Constitution. The Government is also firmly of the view that it is necessary to provide a platform for the promotion of excellence and high standards of conduct by judges.

The Deputy will recall that the current Legislation Programme includes the Judicial Council Bill among those Bills whose publication this Session is a priority. Work on the drafting of the Bill is continuing in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General and my Department is working closely with that Office to bring that work to a timely conclusion in order to ensure publication within the timeframe set out in the Legislation Programme. Furthermore, my Department continues to be engaged in extensive consultations both with the Judiciary and the Courts Service in relation to ongoing drafting work. The Bill has benefitted from past review by the judiciary who considered it as part of the work of the Interim Judicial Council which has been established pending the Bill’s enactment.

The Bill, when published, will provide for the establishment of a Judicial Council and Board of that Council. It will also provide for the establishment of a Judicial Conduct Committee, the membership of which will include lay persons, to facilitate the investigation of allegations of judicial misconduct. That Committee will also have a role in preparing guidelines concerning judicial conduct and ethics. Matters relating to the training of judges will also be addressed.

The Government continues to be committed to progressing this legislation as speedily as



possible. While it is regarded as a priority by the Government it has, in the past, had to give way to other pressing and urgent legislative requirements, some of which arose from our Troika commitments and some of which concerned important social and societal issues such as the establishment of the Court of Appeal and last year's Marriage Referendum. I can assure the Deputy that work on the Bill is very advanced indeed and I look forward to its contents being debated by the Oireachtas. I would hope that it will be possible to begin that debate early in 2017.

### Garda Investigations

71. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the investigation into the disappearance of a person (details supplied). [34828/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Deputy will appreciate that management of particular Garda investigations are matters in the first instance for the Garda authorities and I have no direct role in this regard. I can, however, assure the Deputy that I am aware of the various concerns which have been raised about the case referred to.

I am advised that the Garda investigation in relation to the case referred to is ongoing and that the Garda Commissioner has requested the Serious Crime Review Team (SCRT) to examine the case, as a matter of priority, ensuring that all avenues of enquiry are fully explored and addressed. I expect to receive a further update from the Garda authorities after the SCRT completes its examination.

In this context, the Deputy will appreciate that it would not be appropriate for me to make any more detailed comment at this time.

### Direct Provision Data

72. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the details of all companies involved in contracts for direct provision, including moneys paid to these companies each year over the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34854/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to details of centre location, contractor and occupancy is set out in a table:

#### Contractors for Accommodation Centres

| COUNTY | CENTRE        | ADDRESS     | CONTRACTOR                                | State or privately owned |
|--------|---------------|-------------|---|--------------------------|
| Clare  | Knockalisheen | Meelick     | Campbell Catering Ltd t/a Aramark Ireland | State                    |
| Cork   | Ashbourne Hse | Glounthaune | Barlow Properties                         | Private                  |

| COUNTY   | CENTRE                  | ADDRESS                           | CONTRACTOR                                | State or privately owned |
|----------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
|          | Kinsale Road            | Cork City                         | Campbell Catering Ltd t/a Aramark Ireland | State                    |
|          | Glenvera                | Wellington Road                   | Bideau Ltd                                | Private                  |
|          | Millstreet              | Millstreet                        | Millstreet Equestrian Services            | Private                  |
|          | Clonakilty Lodge        | Clonakilty, Co. Cork              | D and A Ltd                               | Private                  |
| Dublin   | The Towers              | The Ninth Lock, Clondalkin,       | Fazyard Ltd                               | Private                  |
|          | Georgian Court          | 77-79 Lower Gardiner St.          | Old George Ltd                            | Private                  |
|          | Staircase               | 21 Aungier Street                 | Mo Bhaile Ltd                             | Private                  |
|          | Hatch Hall              | 28 Lower Hatch Street             | East Coast Catering (Ireland)             | Private                  |
|          | Balseskin               | St. Margarets, Finglas, Dublin 11 | East Coast Catering (Ireland)             | Private                  |
|          | Watergate House         | 11-14 Usher's Quay, Dublin 8      | Maison Builders Ltd                       | Private                  |
| Galway   | Eglinton                | The Proms, Salthill               | Maplestar Ltd                             | Private                  |
|          | Great Western House     | Eyre Square                       | Shaun Hennelly                            | Private                  |
| Kerry    | Atlas House (Killarney) | Killarney                         | OFM Limited                               | State                    |
|          | Atlas House (Tralee)    | Tralee                            | OFM Limited                               | State                    |
|          | Johnston Marina         | Tralee                            | OFM Limited                               | State                    |
|          | Park Lodge              | Killarney                         | OFM Limited                               | State                    |
| Kildare  | Eyrepowell              | Newbridge                         | Peachport Ltd                             | Private                  |
| Laois    | Montague                | Emo, Portlaoise                   | Fazyard Ltd                               | Private                  |
| Limerick | Hanratty's              | Glentworth Street, Limerick       | Birch Rentals Ltd                         | Private                  |
|          | Westbourne              | Dock Road                         | Westbourne Holiday Hostel Ltd             | Private                  |
|          | Mount Trenchard         | Foynes, Co. Limerick              | Baycaster Ltd                             | Private                  |
| Longford | Richmond Court          | Richmond Street, Longford         | Mint Horizon Ltd                          | Private                  |
| Louth    | Carroll Village         | Dundalk                           | East Coast Catering (Ireland)             | Private                  |

| COUNTY    | CENTRE          | ADDRESS                | CONTRACTOR                                | State or privately owned |
|-----------|-----------------|------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Mayo      | The Old Convent | Ballyhaunis            | Bridgestock                               | Private                  |
| Meath     | Mosney          | Mosney                 | Mosney PLC                                | Private                  |
| Monaghan  | St. Patricks    | Monaghan               | Tattonward Ltd                            | Private                  |
| Sligo     | Globe House     | Chapel Hill            | Bridgestock                               | Private                  |
| Waterford | Atlantic House  | Tramore, Co. Waterford | Atlantic Blue Ltd                         | Private                  |
|           | Ocean View      | Tramore, Co. Waterford | Ocean View Accommodation Ltd              | Private                  |
|           | Birchwood       | Ballytruckle Road      | Stompool Investments Ltd                  | Private                  |
|           | Viking House    | Coffee House Lane      | Millstreet Equestrian Services            | Private                  |
| Westmeath | Athlone         | Athlone                | Campbell Catering Ltd t/a Aramark Ireland | State                    |

Extensive and detailed information on the amount paid by my Department to each company contracted to provide direct provision accommodation every year up to and including 2013 can be found on the RIA website [www.ria.gov.ie](http://www.ria.gov.ie) under the 'Contract Values 2000 - 2013 inclusive (January 2016)' section of the website.

The Deputy will appreciate that it is not appropriate to provide values for current contracts entered into by my Department. Negotiations take place with a number of commercial entities on an ongoing basis with a clear focus on achieving the best value for money in respect of each contract. It is not in the interests of yielding best value for the taxpayer that details of current individual contracts are made available to other commercial bodies who are, or may be in the future, engaged in these negotiations.

### Commercial Rates Exemptions

73. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to have the issue of commercial rates exemption extended to all child care facilities in order to improve the sustainability of centres and offer a pathway to reduce costs on parents; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33533/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I can inform the Deputy that the Commissioner of Valuation is independent in the exercise of his duties under the Valuation Acts 2001- 2105 and the making of valuations for rating purposes is his sole responsibility. I, as Minister for Justice and Equality, have no function in decisions in this regard.

The Valuation Act 2001 as amended by the Valuation (Amendment) Act 2015 provides that all buildings used or developed for any purpose, including constructions affixed thereto, are rateable unless expressly exempted under Schedule 4 of the Act. Such exempt buildings would principally include those used for public worship, education and health care provided on

a not-for-profit basis, and charitable purposes. In general, the Act maintains the long-standing position that all commercial properties - including all private childcare facilities such as play schools, pre-schools, crèches and Montessori schools - are liable for rates.

I understand that inconsistency in the approach to the exemption from rates for childcare and education facilities and calls to exempt all such providers were among the issues raised at a number of stages during the passage of the Valuation (Amendment) Act 2015. As a result, the Government approved an amendment to the Bill, to insert into Schedule 4 of the Valuation Act 2001 an exemption from rates for properties occupied by parties that provide early childhood care and education on a not-for-profit basis. This extension of the childcare and education exemption removed an anomaly that previously existed where those that provided childcare and education on a charitable basis were exempt but those that did so on a not-for-profit basis were not. Since the commencement of the Valuation (Amendment) Act 2015, the Valuation Office has been updating the valuation lists to give effect to this extension of the exemption so that it became effective for qualifying providers in 2016.

The decision taken by Government to extend the exemption from rates for early childcare and education was taken having considered the views of stakeholders in the sector. As outlined in Oireachtas debates during the passage of the legislation, key valuation principles have to be respected to retain the integrity and equity of a system that is a significant source of funding for Local Authorities. One of those principles is that properties of occupiers that operate with the intention of making a profit are rateable. There are a variety of other more appropriate means through which Government can and does support the provision of such services. Making exception to core, long-standing valuation principles can have a far reaching negative impact on the rates system and consequently a far reaching impact on Local Government funding.

In addition to the exemption of those that provide childcare and early education on a not-for-profit basis, paragraph 10 of Schedule 4 of the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015 also exempts from rates childcare facilities that only provide the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme.

The Acts are quite specific about the range of exemptions that can be allowed by the Commissioner, who has no discretionary latitude to grant exemptions not covered by Schedule 4. As a matter of course, the Valuation Office examines all claimant cases on their individual merits by reference to the relevant statutory provisions governing the operation of the Valuation Acts as they relate to pre-school childcare facilities and all other categories of properties.

Regarding the payment of rates by individual ratepayers, the Deputy will be aware that under Irish law there is a distinct separation of function between the valuation of rateable property and the setting and collection of commercial rates. The amount of rates payable by a ratepayer in any calendar year is a product of the valuation set by the Valuation Office multiplied by the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) decided annually by the elected members of the local authority. The latter is a reserved function of the elected members and the Commissioner of Valuation has no function in this regard.

Private childcare facilities which are operated for profit, form part of the rateable valuation base on a nationwide basis. The exemption from rateability of such facilities would reduce local authority revenues, which if it were not to entail an increase in Exchequer funding of local authorities, would have to be made good by imposing a corresponding increase on the remaining ratepayers. Accordingly, there are no plans at this time to extend the exemption from rates to for-profit childcare facilities, which as I have indicated would represent a significant departure from core valuation principles. However, the Deputy will be aware of the wide range of measures being pursued by my colleague the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in relation to the childcare sector.

## **Garda Industrial Relations**

74. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the costs of the Lansdowne Road agreement on Garda pay for 2017; the areas in which each cost arises and the numbers impacted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34748/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, following intensive negotiations between the Government, the Garda Representative Association (GRA) and Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission, the Labour Court issued a recommendation on 3 November last in relation to the dispute. In the case of individual members, the recommendation for the GRA and AGSI would provide extra remuneration of around €4,000 on average to a member of the Service over the next 12 months through:

- an increase in the value of the rent allowance by €500 bringing it to €4,655 per annum with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the integration of the rent allowance in the new amount of €4,655 into salary with consequential increases in unsocial hours and overtime payments also with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the introduction of a €15 premium payment per annual leave day to compensate for the uncertainty attaching to the taking of leave by Gardaí. This payment will be worth €510 per annum to a Garda with 34 days annual leave;

- the implementation of a long-standing recommendation of the Garda Inspectorate through the introduction of paid 15 minute pre-tour briefing or tasking sessions with effect from 1 January 2017.

Under the Labour Court recommendation, new recruits who do not currently receive rent allowance, will have it restored, in addition to the other improvements I just listed. In addition, the increment freeze in place for GRA members since 1 July will be lifted and any arrears arising from increments foregone will be paid.

The Government has also made it clear that it is committed to introducing legislative change to give the Garda Associations the right of access to the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court.

On foot of the Labour Court recommendation, the GRA and AGSI agreed to defer the intended industrial action over the course of the four Fridays in November to facilitate a ballot of their membership. This was a very welcome decision by the Garda associations and has ensured that a full policing service remains in place.

The Government fully respects the decision of the Labour Court as the independent industrial relations body of last resort in the State and agreed last week to accept its recommendation. The outcome of the process is now being examined in detail by all sides and it is hoped that it will form the basis for a final resolution of this dispute following the balloting of members of AGSI and the GRA in due course.

The independent recommendation of the Labour Court seeks to address the concerns that have been articulated by the representative bodies in relation to their pay and conditions including of new recruits, and their access to the statutory dispute resolution bodies. The nature of the Labour Court's recommendation is such that some of the cost of the implementation of the proposals, if they are accepted by the members of AGSI and the GRA, depend on the amount of

overtime worked in any year. That said, I am advised that, depending on a number of variables, the estimated gross annual cost of implementing the Labour Court Recommendation could exceed €50m; however, this gross cost will be offset by statutory deductions for tax, PRSI, etc., which will reduce the net Exchequer cost.

Once the outcome of the ballots is known and if the proposals are accepted, the additional budgetary cost will be the subject of discussions between my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

What is most important at this juncture is that members of AGSI and the GRA are afforded the time and space to give the Labour Court's recommendation the detailed consideration that it deserves.

### **Haddington Road Agreement Review**

75. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the review of Garda pay and conditions that was to be completed by 1 June 2014 is still ongoing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34839/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Haddington Road Agreement provided for a review of An Garda Síochána with the following terms of reference:

*To review and make recommendations on the use by An Garda Síochána of the resources available to it, with the objective of achieving and maintaining the highest levels of efficiency and effectiveness in its operation and administration. The review shall encompass all aspects of the operation and administration of the Garda Síochána including, the structure, organisation and staffing of the Garda Síochána; the deployment of members and civilian staff to relevant and appropriate roles; the remuneration and conditions of service of members of An Garda Síochána, including an evaluation of annualised hours/shift pay arrangements; the appropriate structures and mechanism for the future resolution of matters relating to pay, industrial relations and attendant matters.*

The Review, as noted by the Deputy, was to be completed by 1 June 2014. However, its commencement was delayed due to differing views between the official side and the Garda Associations as to how it should be conducted. It was eventually decided, well into 2014, that it would be conducted in two parts with the Garda Inspectorate, having regard to its statutory role under the Garda Síochána Act 2005, undertaking a review of the structure, staffing and employment of members, and Mr Ray McGee, formerly of the Labour Court, undertaking the remaining elements concerning remuneration and condition and appropriate industrial relations mechanisms. The Inspectorate has completed its work and its report "Changing Policing in Ireland - Delivering a Visible, Accessible and Responsive Service" was published last December and is in the process of being implemented. The remaining part is nearing conclusion under Mr John Horgan, former Chair of the Labour Court, whom I appointed following the resignation of Mr McGee last May. I understand that Mr Horgan expects to conclude his work in early December and I look forward to receiving his report.

### **Garda Deployment**

76. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in counties Cavan and Monaghan



on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34669/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 15 have been assigned to the Cavan/Monaghan Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and classroom based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Cavan/Monaghan Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Cavan/Monaghan Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| CAVAN/MONAGHAN DIVISION 31 OCTOBER 2010 |                   |               |   |
|---|-------------------|---------------|---|
| Division                                | Stations          | Garda Numbers |   |
| BAILIEBORO DISTRICT                     | BAILIEBORO        | 40            |   |
|   | BALLYJAMESDUFF    | 4             |   |
|   | COOTEHILL         | 6             |   |
|   | KINGSCOURT        | 1             |   |
|   | MULLAGH           | 1             |   |
|   | SHERCOCK          | 1             |   |
|   | VIRGINIA          | 11            |   |
|   | TOTAL             | 64            |   |
| CARRICKMACROSS DISTRICT                 | BALLYBAY          | 4             |   |
|   | CARRICKMACROSS    | 41            |   |
|   | CASTLEBLANEY      | 30            |   |
|   | ROCKCORRY         | 1             |   |
|   | TOTAL             | 76            |   |
| CAVAN DISTRICT                          | ARVA              | 3             |   |
|   | BALLINAGH         | 1             |   |
|   | BALLYCONNELL      | 16            |   |
|   | BELTURBET         | 6             |   |
|   | BLACKLION         | 3             |   |
|   | CAVAN             | 64            |   |
|   | DOWRA             | 1             |   |
|   | KILLESHANDRA      | 1             |   |
|   | KILNALECK         | 2             |   |
|   | SWANLINBAR        | 1             |   |
|   | TOTAL             | 98            |   |
|   | MONAGHAN DISTRICT | CLONES        | 4 |
|   |                   | EMYVALE       | 2 |
| MONAGHAN                                |                   | 72            |   |
| SCOTSTOWN                               |                   | 2             |   |
| TOTAL                                   |                   | 80            |   |
| CAVAN/MONAGHAN TOTAL                    | 25 Stations       | 318           |   |

| CAVAN/MONAGHAN DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 |                |               |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Division                             | Stations       | Garda Numbers |
| BAILIEBORO DISTRICT                  | BAILIEBORO     | 40            |
|                                      | BALLYJAMESDUFF | 4             |
|                                      | COOTEHILL      | 9             |
|                                      | KINGSCOURT     | 6             |
|                                      | MULLAGH        | 1             |
|                                      | SHERCOCK       | 2             |
|                                      | TULLYVIN       | 0             |
|                                      | VIRGINIA       | 5             |
|                                      | Total          | 67            |

|                         |                |     |
|-------------------------|----------------|-----|
| BALLYCONNELL DISTRICT   | BALLYCONNELL   | 29  |
|                         | BAWNBOY        | 1   |
|                         | BELTURBET      | 4   |
|                         | BLACKLION      | 4   |
|                         | DOWRA          | 2   |
|                         | KILLESHANDRA   | 2   |
|                         | SWANLINBAR     | 2   |
|                         | Total          | 44  |
| CARRICKMACROSS DISTRICT | BALLYBAY       | 5   |
|                         | CARRICKMACROSS | 51  |
|                         | CASTLEBLANEY   | 24  |
|                         | CORRINSHIGAGH  | 2   |
|                         | ROCKCORRY      | 1   |
|                         | SHANTONAGH     | 2   |
|                         | Total          | 85  |
| CAVAN DISTRICT          | ARVA           | 3   |
|                         | BALLINAGH      | 3   |
|                         | CAVAN          | 69  |
|                         | KILNALECK      | 4   |
|                         | REDHILLS       | 1   |
|                         | STRADONE       | 1   |
|                         | Total          | 81  |
| MONAGHAN DISTRICT       | CLONES         | 9   |
|                         | CLONTIBRET     | 1   |
|                         | EMYVALE        | 4   |
|                         | MONAGHAN       | 101 |
|                         | NEWBLISS       | 1   |
|                         | SCOTSTOWN      | 4   |
|                         | SMITHBORO      | 0   |
|                         | Total          | 120 |
| CAVAN/MONAGHAN TOTAL    | 34 Stations    | 397 |

### Crime Levels

77. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for County Meath are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in County Meath have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34718/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for County Meath reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that county.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures

for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardaí directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division  | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|-----------|--|
| Co. Meath | Longwood   |

### Brexit Issues

78. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she has considered the implications for cross-Border co-operation in justice and policing matters in the context of Brexit. [34825/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the

Deputy will be aware the Government continues to prepare to face the challenges and opportunities that are presented by the UK's decision to leave the European Union, including in the field of justice and police co-operation.

I have met with the Northern Ireland Justice Minister, Claire Sugden, and with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, James Brokenshire, in recent weeks and months and we have had the opportunity to discuss the potential implications for the UK's exit from the EU for North-South co-operation in justice and policing. We are agreed that it is our shared aim to seek to ensure that the current high levels of co-operation on this island can be continued.

There is close and ongoing co-operation between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI in respect of all aspects of policing. This co-operation is based firmly on a shared commitment to improving community safety throughout the island of Ireland, to disrupt criminal and terrorist activity and to enhance the policing capability of both police services on the island.

There is also strong ongoing co-operation across the range of criminal justice areas involving the Justice Departments and justice agencies North and South that includes initiatives in respect of forensic science, youth justice, probation and the management of offenders and issues relating to the requirements of social diversity in the justice system.

There is also a range of important areas of civil justice to do with contracts, debt recovery and family law, for example, which are based in EU law and would have particular relevance to the circumstances in which people live and do business on the island of Ireland.

Officials in my Department have been working to identify the principal sectoral impacts and opportunities in the short to medium term and to identify priority actions in terms of policy measures relating to North-South justice and policing co-operation. There has been and will continue to be close interaction with officials in the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland in this regard.

There can be no question about the extent to which EU measures in respect of policing and in the criminal and civil justice fields can support actions to combat crime and to improve community safety and support justice. It is essential, therefore, to work to ensure that the greatest possible levels of co-operation can continue to be maintained.

### **Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission Investigations**

79. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the GSOC inquiry into events surrounding evidence given to the O'Higgins commission, particularly in relation to a meeting in Mullingar and attempts to undermine the credibility of a person; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34848/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy is aware, on 16 June 2016 I made a referral to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission under section 102(5) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 concerning certain allegations which arose following the publication of the final report of the O'Higgins Commission of Investigation.

Obviously I have to be careful not to say anything which might interfere with the investigation currently underway by GSOC. As the Deputy is aware, the Chairperson of GSOC wrote to me seeking access to certain records of the O'Higgins Commission of Investigation. In view of the provisions of the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004 concerning confidentiality of evidence given before a Commission of Investigation, I sought the advice of the Attorney Gen-

eral on the matter. Having received the Attorney General's advice I wrote to the Chairperson of GSOC pointing out that access to the records in question can be sought through an application to court for an order directing that the material be provided. It is now a matter for GSOC how to proceed.

While the granting of any such order is a matter for the Courts, I will, of course, comply with any such court order.

Accordingly, as the GSOC investigation is on-going, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter.

### **Garda Reserve**

80. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda reservists currently stationed in Clondalkin, Lucan and Ronanstown and also in the DMR western; the comparable figures for 2014 and 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34846/16]

**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 Garda Reserves, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources. The number of Garda Reserves in the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) West Division on 31 December 2014, 31 December 2015 and on 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was as set out in the table.

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to double the Garda Reserve to act in a supportive role undertaking local patrols and crime reduction measures.

I am informed that the Commissioner has in recent months assigned a Superintendent to head up the Garda Reserve Management Office and that Office is currently undertaking an audit of the experience and skills of Reserves which, when completed, will assist Garda management in considering the future role to be played by the Reserve. I am also informed that work is ongoing on the development of a recruitment plan with the objective of recruiting and training 300 new Reserves annually starting next year, to bring the strength of the Reserve up from its current strength of 789 members to 2,000.

| Number of Garda Reserves - DMR WEST | DEC 2014 | DEC 2015 | SEPT 2016 |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Cabra                               | 2        | 1        | 0         |
| Finglas                             | 8        | 6        | 5         |
| Blanchardstown                      | 20       | 17       | 8         |
| Lucan                               | 15       | 14       | 11        |
| Ronanstown                          | 7        | 5        | 4         |
| Ballyfermot                         | 4        | 4        | 3         |
| Clondalkin                          | 8        | 4        | 4         |
| Rathcoole                           | 0        | 0        | 0         |
| Total                               | 64       | 51       | 35        |



## **Garda Industrial Relations**

81. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the funding stream that will be used to make additional payments to Garda as a result of recent industrial action; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34824/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, following intensive negotiations between the Government, the Garda Representative Association (GRA) and Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission, the Labour Court issued a recommendation on 3 November last in relation to the dispute. In the case of individual members, the recommendation for the GRA and AGSI would provide extra remuneration of around €4,000 on average to a member of the Service over the next 12 months through:

- an increase in the value of the rent allowance by €500 bringing it to €4,655 per annum with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the integration of the rent allowance in the new amount of €4,655 into salary with consequential increases in unsocial hours and overtime payments also with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the introduction of a €15 premium payment per annual leave day to compensate for the uncertainty attaching to the taking of leave by Gardaí. This payment will be worth €510 per annum to a Garda with 34 days annual leave;

- the implementation of a long-standing recommendation of the Garda Inspectorate through the introduction of paid 15 minute pre-tour briefing or tasking sessions with effect from 1 January 2017.

Under the Labour Court recommendation, new recruits who do not currently receive rent allowance, will have it restored, in addition to the other improvements I just listed. In addition, the increment freeze in place for GRA members since 1 July will be lifted and any arrears arising from increments foregone will be paid.

The Government has also made it clear that it is committed to introducing legislative change to give the Garda Associations the right of access to the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court.

On foot of the Labour Court recommendation, the GRA and AGSI agreed to defer the intended industrial action over the course of the four Fridays in November to facilitate a ballot of their membership. This was a very welcome decision by the Garda associations and has ensured that a full policing service remains in place.

The Government fully respects the decision of the Labour Court as the independent industrial relations body of last resort in the State and agreed last week to accept its recommendation. The outcome of the process is now being examined in detail by all sides and it is hoped that it will form the basis for a final resolution of this dispute following the balloting of members of AGSI and the GRA in due course.

The independent recommendation of the Labour Court seeks to address the concerns that have been articulated by the representative bodies in relation to their pay and conditions including of new recruits, and their access to the statutory dispute resolution bodies. The nature of the Labour Court's recommendation is such that some of the cost of the implementation of the proposals, if they are accepted by the members of AGSI and the GRA, depend on the amount of

overtime worked in any year. That said, I am advised that, depending on a number of variables, the estimated gross annual cost of implementing the Labour Court Recommendation could exceed €50m; however, this gross cost will be offset by statutory deductions for tax, PRSI, etc., which will reduce the net Exchequer cost.

Once the outcome of the ballots is known and if the proposals are accepted, the additional budgetary cost will be the subject of discussions between my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

What is most important at this juncture is that members of AGSI and the GRA are afforded the time and space to give the Labour Court's recommendation the detailed consideration that it deserves.

### **Garda Deployment**

82. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in County Kerry on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34687/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 10 have been assigned to the Kerry Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and classroom based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and

resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Kerry Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Kerry Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| KERRY DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |                 |               |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Division                   | Stations        | Garda Numbers |
| CAHERCIVEEN DISTRICT       | BALLINSKELLIGS  | 1             |
|                            | CAHERCIVEEN     | 24            |
|                            | CASTLEMAINE     | 1             |
|                            | GLENBEIGH       | 1             |
|                            | KILLORGLIN      | 13            |
|                            | PORTMAGEE       | 1             |
|                            | SNEEM           | 2             |
|                            | VALENTIA ISLAND | 1             |
|                            | WATERVILLE      | 1             |
|                            | TOTAL           | 45            |
| KILLARNEY DISTRICT         | BARRADUFF       | 1             |
|                            | BEAUFORT        | 1             |
|                            | CASTLEISLAND    | 13            |
|                            | FARRANFORE      | 1             |
|                            | KENMARE         | 9             |
|                            | KILGARVAN       | 1             |
|                            | KILLARNEY       | 73            |
|                            | LAURAGH         | 1             |
|                            | TOTAL           | 100           |
| LISTOWEL DISTRICT          | BALLYBUNION     | 10            |
|                            | BALLYDUFF       | 1             |
|                            | BALLYHEIGUE     | 2             |
|                            | BALLYLONGFORD   | 1             |
|                            | BROSNA          | 1             |
|                            | KNOCKNAGOSHALL  | 1             |
|                            | LISTOWEL        | 39            |
|                            | LIXNAW          | 1             |
|                            | MOYVANE         | 2             |
|                            | TARBERT         | 1             |
| TOTAL                      | 59              |               |

| KERRY DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |               |     |
|----------------------------|---------------|-----|
| TRALEE DISTRICT            | ABBEYDORNEY   | 1   |
|                            | ANNASCAUL     | 1   |
|                            | ARDFERT       | 2   |
|                            | BALLYFERRITER | 1   |
|                            | CAMP          | 1   |
|                            | CASTLEGREGORY | 1   |
|                            | CLOCHAN       | 1   |
|                            | DINGLE        | 10  |
|                            | FENIT         | 0   |
|                            | TRALEE        | 121 |
|                            | TOTAL         | 139 |
| KERRY DIVISION TOTAL       | 37 Stations   | 343 |

| KERRY DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 |                        |               |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Division                    | Stations               | Garda Numbers |
| KILLARNEY DISTRICT          | CAHERCIVEEN            | 15            |
|                             | GLENBEIGH              | 1             |
|                             | KENMARE                | 11            |
|                             | KILLARNEY              | 56            |
|                             | KILLORGLIN             | 13            |
|                             | PORTMAGEE              | 1             |
|                             | SNEEM                  | 1             |
|                             | WATERVILLE             | 1             |
|                             | TOTAL                  | 99            |
| LISTOWEL DISTRICT           | BALLYBUNION            | 6             |
|                             | BALLYDUFF              | 1             |
|                             | BALLYHEIGUE            | 1             |
|                             | KNOCKNAGOSHALL         | 1             |
|                             | LISTOWEL               | 39            |
|                             | LIXNAW                 | 1             |
|                             | TARBERT                | 2             |
|                             | TOTAL                  | 51            |
| TRALEE DISTRICT             | AN DAINGEAN            | 9             |
|                             | ANNASCAUL              | 1             |
|                             | ARDFERT                | 2             |
|                             | BAILE AN FHEIRTEÁRA-IG | 1             |
|                             | CASTLEGREGORY          | 2             |
|                             | CASTLEISLAND           | 30            |
|                             | CASTLEMAINE            | 1             |
|                             | FARRANFORE             | 2             |
|                             | TRALEE                 | 99            |
|                             | TOTAL                  | 147           |
| KERRY DIVISION              | 24 Stations            | 297           |

## **Garda Deployment**

83. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in County Galway on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to County Galway; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34726/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 5 have been assigned to the Galway Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and classroom based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Galway Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Galway Division

on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| GALWAY DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |              |               |
|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Division                    | Stations     | Garda Numbers |
| BALLINASLOE                 | AHASCRAUGH   | 1             |
|                             | BALLINASLOE  | 46            |
|                             | BALLYGAR     | 3             |
|                             | CREGGS       | 1             |
|                             | KILCONNELL   | 1             |
|                             | KILTORMER    | 0             |
|                             | MENLOUGH     | 1             |
|                             | MOUNT BELLEW | 10            |
|                             | MOYLOUGH     | 1             |
|                             | TOTAL        | 64            |
| CLIFDEN                     | CARNA        | 2             |
|                             | CLIFDEN      | 30            |
|                             | LENNAUN      | 1             |
|                             | LETTERFRACK  | 1             |
|                             | MAAM         | 2             |
|                             | RECESS       | 1             |
|                             | ROUNDSTONE   | 1             |
|                             | TOTAL        | 38            |
| GALWAY                      | ATHENRY      | 5             |
|                             | CARN DOLLA   | 1             |
|                             | GALWAY       | 216           |
|                             | KILTULLAGH   | 0             |
|                             | LOUGH GEORGE | 1             |
|                             | MONIVEA      | 1             |
|                             | ORANMORE     | 35            |
|                             | TOTAL        | 259           |
| GORT                        | ARDRAHAN     | 1             |
|                             | CRAUGHWELL   | 6             |
|                             | GORT         | 29            |
|                             | KILCHREEST   | 0             |
|                             | KILCOLGAN    | 1             |
|                             | KINVARA      | 2             |
|                             | SHANAGLISH   | 1             |
|                             | TOTAL        | 40            |
| LOUGHREA                    | EYRECOURT    | 1             |
|                             | KILLIMOR     | 0             |
|                             | KILRICKLE    | 1             |
|                             | LOUGHREA     | 39            |
|                             | NEW INN      | 1             |
|                             | PORTUMNA     | 10            |
|                             | TYNAGH       | 1             |



Questions - Written Answers

| GALWAY DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |              |     |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-----|
|                             | WOODFORD     | 1   |
|                             | TOTAL        | 54  |
| SALTHILL                    | CARRAROE     | 4   |
|                             | CILL RONAIN  | 3   |
|                             | INVERIN      | 1   |
|                             | LEITIR MOR   | 1   |
|                             | MOYCULLEN    | 3   |
|                             | ROS MUC      | 1   |
|                             | SALTHILL     | 58  |
|                             | SPIDDLE      | 3   |
|                             | UACHTARARD   | 6   |
|                             | TOTAL        | 80  |
| TUAM                        | BALLYMOE     | 1   |
|                             | BARNADERG    | 0   |
|                             | COROFIN      | 1   |
|                             | DUNMORE      | 6   |
|                             | GLENAMADDY   | 1   |
|                             | HEADFORD     | 5   |
|                             | KILCONLY     | 1   |
|                             | MILLTOWN     | 1   |
|                             | TUAM         | 56  |
|                             | WILLIAMSTOWN | 1   |
|                             | TOTAL        | 73  |
| GALWAY                      | 57 Stations  | 608 |

| GALWAY DIVISION 30 SEP 2016 |               |               |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Division                    | Stations      | Garda Numbers |
| BALLINASLOE                 | AHASCRAUGH    | 1             |
|                             | BALLINASLOE   | 42            |
|                             | BALLYGAR      | 1             |
|                             | CREGGS        | 1             |
|                             | KILCONNELL    | 1             |
|                             | MOUNT BELLEW  | 7             |
|                             | MOYLOUGH      | 1             |
|                             | TOTAL         | 54            |
| CLIFDEN                     | AN MÁM        | 3             |
|                             | CARNA         | 2             |
|                             | CLIFDEN       | 27            |
|                             | CLOCH NA RÓN  | 1             |
|                             | LETTERFRACK   | 1             |
|                             | SRAITH SALACH | 1             |
|                             | TOTAL         | 35            |
| GALWAY                      | ATHENRY       | 5             |
|                             | GAILLIMH      | 213           |

| GALWAY DIVISION 30 SEP 2016 |                 |     |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----|
|                             | LOUGH GEORGE    | 1   |
|                             | MONIVEA         | 1   |
|                             | ÓRÁN MÓR        | 42  |
|                             | TOTAL           | 262 |
| LOUGHREA                    | CRAUGHWELL      | 4   |
|                             | EYRECOURT       | 1   |
|                             | GORT            | 27  |
|                             | KILLIMOR        | 1   |
|                             | KILRICKLE       | 1   |
|                             | KINVARA         | 2   |
|                             | LOUGHREA        | 33  |
|                             | PORTUMNA        | 7   |
|                             | WOODFORD        | 1   |
|                             | TOTAL           | 77  |
| SALTHILL                    | AN CHEATHRÚ RUA | 5   |
|                             | AN SPIDÉAL      | 2   |
|                             | CILL RÓNÁIN     | 4   |
|                             | INDREABHÁN      | 1   |
|                             | LEITIR MÓIR     | 1   |
|                             | MAIGH CUILINN   | 1   |
|                             | ROS MUC         | 1   |
|                             | SALTHILL        | 54  |
|                             | UACHTARARD      | 3   |
|                             | TOTAL           | 72  |
| TUAM                        | BARNADERG       | 1   |
|                             | DUNMORE         | 6   |
|                             | GLENAMADDY      | 1   |
|                             | HEADFORD        | 2   |
|                             | TUAM            | 54  |
|                             | WILLIAMSTOWN    | 1   |
|                             | TOTAL           | 65  |
| GALWAY                      | 42 Stations     | 565 |

### Garda Deployment

84. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in counties Roscommon and Longford on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to counties Roscommon and Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34677/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members,

2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 5 have been assigned to the Roscommon/Longford Division respectively. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and classroom based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Roscommon/Longford Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Roscommon/Longford Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| ROSCOMMON/LONGFORD DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |             |               |
|---|-------------|---------------|
| Division                                | Stations    | Garda Numbers |
| BOYLE                                   | BOYLE       | 30            |
|   | COOTEHALL   | 1             |
|   | ELPHIN      | 2             |
|   | KEADUE      | 1             |
|   | ROOSKY      | 3             |
|   | STROKESTOWN | 4             |

| ROSCOMMON/LONGFORD DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |                 |     |
|---|-----------------|-----|
|   | TARMONBARRY     | 2   |
|   | TOTAL           | 43  |
| CASTLEREA                               | BALLAGHADERREEN | 7   |
|   | BALLINLOUGH     | 2   |
|   | BALLINTUBBER    | 1   |
|   | CASTLEREA       | 35  |
|   | FRENCHPARK      | 3   |
|   | LOUGHGLYNN      | 1   |
|   | TULSK           | 2   |
|   | TOTAL           | 51  |
| GRANARD                                 | ARDAGH          | 1   |
|   | BALLINALEE      | 2   |
|   | DRUMLISH        | 2   |
|   | EDGEWORTHSTOWN  | 7   |
|   | GRANARD         | 30  |
|   | SMEAR           | 1   |
|   | TOTAL           | 43  |
| LONGFORD                                | BALLYMAHON      | 6   |
|   | KENAGH          | 1   |
|   | LANESBORO       | 6   |
|   | LONGFORD        | 63  |
|   | NEWTOWNCASHEL   | 1   |
|   | TOTAL           | 77  |
| ROSCOMMON                               | ATHLEAGUE       | 2   |
|   | BALLYFORAN      | 1   |
|   | CLONARK         | 1   |
|   | KNOCKCROGHERY   | 9   |
|   | ROSCOMMON       | 75  |
|   | TAUGHMACONNELL  | 1   |
|   | TOTAL           | 89  |
| ROSCOMMON/LONGFORD                      | 31 Stations     | 303 |

| ROSCOMMON/LONGFORD DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 |                 |               |
|--|-----------------|---------------|
| Division                                 | Stations        | Garda Numbers |
| CASTLEREA                                | BALLAGHADERREEN | 8             |
|  | BALLINLOUGH     | 2             |
|  | BOYLE           | 25            |
|  | CASTLEREA       | 38            |
|  | ELPHIN          | 2             |
|  | FRENCHPARK      | 3             |
|  | KEADUE          | 1             |
|  | ROOSKY          | 4             |
|  | STROKESTOWN     | 5             |
|  | TULSK           | 1             |

| ROSCOMMON/LONGFORD DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 |                |     |
|--|----------------|-----|
|  | TOTAL          | 89  |
| GRANARD                                  | DRUMLISH       | 2   |
|  | EDGEWORTHSTOWN | 11  |
|  | GRANARD        | 30  |
|  | SMEAR          | 1   |
|  | TOTAL          | 44  |
| LONGFORD                                 | BALLYMAHON     | 9   |
|  | KENAGH         | 1   |
|  | LANESBORO      | 6   |
|  | LONGFORD       | 69  |
|  | TOTAL          | 85  |
| ROSCOMMON                                | ATHLEAGUE      | 1   |
|  | CLONARK        | 5   |
|  | ROSCOMMON      | 72  |
|  | TAUGHMACONNELL | 1   |
|  | TOTAL          | 79  |
| ROSCOMMON/LONG-FORD                      | 22 Stations    | 297 |

### Garda Deployment

85. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in County Louth on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to County Louth; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34673/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 23 have been assigned to the Louth Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest

this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Louth Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Louth Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| LOUTH DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |                  |               |
|----------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Division                   | Stations         | Garda Numbers |
| ARDEE DISTRICT             | ARDEE            | 31            |
|                            | CASTLEBELLINGHAM | 3             |
|                            | COLLON           | 6             |
|                            | LOUTH            | 1             |
|                            | TOTAL            | 41            |
| DROGHEDA DISTRICT          | CLOUGHERHEAD     | 4             |
|                            | DROGHEDA         | 102           |
|                            | DUNLEER          | 5             |
|                            | TOTAL            | 111           |
| DUNDALK DISTRICT           | BLACKROCK        | 5             |
|                            | CARLINGFORD      | 6             |
|                            | DROMAD           | 7             |
|                            | DUNDALK          | 133           |
|                            | HACKBALLSCROSS   | 8             |
|                            | OMEATH           | 5             |
|                            | TOTAL            | 164           |
| LOUTH DIVISION TOTAL       | 13 Stations      | 316           |



| LOUTH DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 |                  |               |
|-----------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Division                    | Stations         | Garda Numbers |
| ARDEE DISTRICT              | ARDEE            | 26            |
|                             | CASTLEBELLINGHAM | 2             |
|                             | COLLON           | 5             |
|                             | LOUTH            | 1             |
|                             | TOTAL            | 34            |
| DROGHEDA DISTRICT           | CLOUGHERHEAD     | 3             |
|                             | DROGHEDA         | 96            |
|                             | DUNLEER          | 6             |
|                             | TOTAL            | 105           |
| DUNDALK DISTRICT            | BLACKROCK        | 3             |
|                             | CARLINGFORD      | 6             |
|                             | DRUMAD           | 7             |
|                             | DUNDALK          | 138           |
|                             | HACKBALLSCROSS   | 5             |
|                             | OMEATH           | 4             |
|                             | TOTAL            | 163           |
| LOUTH DIVISION              | 13 Stations      | 302           |

### Garda Deployment

86. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in north Cork on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to north Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34689/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the

13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the North Cork Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the North Cork Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| CORK NORTH DIVISION 31 OCT 2016 |                  |               |
|---------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Division                        | Stations         | Garda Numbers |
| COBH DISTRICT                   | CARRIG NA BHFEAR | 1             |
|                                 | CARRIGTWOHILL    | 3             |
|                                 | COBH             | 39            |
|                                 | GLANMIRE         | 21            |
|                                 | GLENVILLE        | 1             |
|                                 | WATERGRASSHILL   | 1             |
|                                 | TOTAL            | 66            |
| FERMOY DISTRICT                 | BALLYNOE         | 1             |
|                                 | CASTLETOWNROCHE  | 2             |
|                                 | FERMOY           | 60            |
|                                 | KILDORRERY       | 1             |
|                                 | KILWORTH         | 2             |
|                                 | MITCHELSTOWN     | 23            |
|                                 | RATHCORMAC       | 1             |
|                                 | TOTAL            | 90            |
| MALLOW DISTRICT                 | BUTTEVANT        | 2             |
|                                 | CHARLEVILLE      | 18            |
|                                 | DONERAILE        | 2             |
|                                 | GLANTAINE        | 1             |
|                                 | LISCARROLL       | 1             |
|                                 | MALLOW           | 47            |

Questions - Written Answers

| CORK NORTH DIVISION 31 OCT 2016 |             |     |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-----|
|                                 | MILFORD     | 2   |
|                                 | TOTAL       | 73  |
| MIDDLETON DISTRICT              | BALLYCOTTON | 1   |
|                                 | CLOYNE      | 1   |
|                                 | KILLEAGH    | 1   |
|                                 | MIDDLETON   | 55  |
|                                 | WHITEGATE   | 1   |
|                                 | YOUGHAL     | 24  |
|                                 | TOTAL       | 83  |
| CORK NORTH TOTAL                | 26 Stations | 312 |

| CORK NORTH DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 |                 |               |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Division                         | Stations        | Garda Numbers |
| FERMOY                           | CASTLETOWNROCHE | 2             |
|                                  | FERMOY          | 54            |
|                                  | KILDORRERY      | 1             |
|                                  | KILWORTH        | 1             |
|                                  | MITCHELSTOWN    | 20            |
|                                  | RATHCORMAC      | 1             |
|                                  | WATERGRASSHILL  | 2             |
|                                  | TOTAL           | 81            |
| MALLOW                           | BUTTEVANT       | 1             |
|                                  | CHARLEVILLE     | 19            |
|                                  | DONERAILE       | 2             |
|                                  | GLANTAINE       | 1             |
|                                  | KANTURK         | 21            |
|                                  | LISCARROLL      | 1             |
|                                  | MALLOW          | 54            |
|                                  | MILFORD         | 1             |
|                                  | NEWMARKET       | 2             |
|                                  | TOTAL           | 102           |
| MIDDLETON                        | BALLYCOTTON     | 1             |
|                                  | CARRIGTWOHILL   | 2             |
|                                  | CLOYNE          | 1             |
|                                  | COBH            | 35            |
|                                  | KILLEAGH        | 1             |
|                                  | MIDDLETON       | 50            |
|                                  | WHITEGATE       | 1             |
|                                  | YOUGHAL         | 23            |
|                                  | TOTAL           | 114           |
| CORK NORTH TOTAL                 | 24 Stations     | 297           |

## Crime Levels

87. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for west Cork are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in west Cork have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34691/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for west Cork reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that area.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardai directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division  | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|-----------|--|
| West Cork | Inishannon   |
|           | Kilbrittain  |
|           | Timoleague   |
|           | Kealkil  |
|           | Glengarrif   |
|           | Durrus   |
|           | Ballydehob   |
|           | Drimoleague  |
|           | Roscarberry  |
|           | Baltimore  |
|           | Drinagh  |
|           | Coachford  |
|           | Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh                                       |
|           | Crookstown   |
|           | Tarelton   |
|           | Ballydesmond   |
|           | Boherbue   |
|           | Rathmore   |

### Garda Deployment

88. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in counties Carlow and Kilkenny on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to counties Carlow and Kilkenny; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34661/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 20 have been assigned to the Kilkenny/Carlow Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and classroom based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Kilkenny/ Carlow Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Kilkenny/Carlow Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

|                                      |                |     |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----|
| KILKENNY/CARLOW DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |                |     |
| CARLOW DISTRICT                      | BALLON         | 1   |
|                                      | BORRIS         | 2   |
|                                      | CARLOW         | 79  |
|                                      | HACKETSTOWN    | 1   |
|                                      | LEIGHLINBRIDGE | 2   |
|                                      | MUINEBHEAG     | 11  |
|                                      | MYSHALL        | 1   |
|                                      | RATHVILLY      | 1   |
|                                      | TULLOW         | 18  |
|                                      | Total          | 116 |
| KILKENNY DISTRICT                    | BALLYRAGGET    | 0   |
|                                      | CALLAN         | 6   |
|                                      | CASTLECOMER    | 14  |
|                                      | FRESHFORD      | 1   |
|                                      | JOHNSTOWN      | 3   |
|                                      | KILKENNY       | 109 |
|                                      | URLINGFORD     | 1   |
|                                      | Total          | 134 |
| THOMASTOWN DISTRICT                  | BALLYHALE      | 1   |



Questions - Written Answers

|                                      |                 |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----|
| KILKENNY/CARLOW DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 |                 |     |
|                                      | BENNETSBRIDGE   | 1   |
|                                      | GLENMORE        | 1   |
|                                      | GORESBRIDGE     | 2   |
|                                      | GRAIGUENAMANAGH | 7   |
|                                      | INISTIOGE       | 1   |
|                                      | KILMACOW        | 1   |
|                                      | KILMOGANNY      | 1   |
|                                      | MOONCOIN        | 8   |
|                                      | MULLINAVAT      | 6   |
|                                      | PILTOWN         | 2   |
|                                      | STONYFORD       | 1   |
|                                      | THOMASTOWN      | 43  |
|                                      | Total           | 75  |
| KILKENNY/CARLOW TOTAL                | 29 Stations     | 325 |

|                              |                 |     |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-----|
| KILKENNY/CARLOW 30 SEPT 2016 |                 |     |
| CARLOW                       | BALLON          | 1   |
|                              | BORRIS          | 2   |
|                              | CARLOW          | 78  |
|                              | HACKETSTOWN     | 1   |
|                              | MUINEBHEAG      | 10  |
|                              | MYSHALL         | 1   |
|                              | RATHVILLY       | 1   |
|                              | TULLOW          | 15  |
|                              | TOTAL           | 109 |
| KILKENNY                     | CALLAN          | 6   |
|                              | CASTLECOMER     | 11  |
|                              | KILKENNY        | 112 |
|                              | URLINGFORD      | 2   |
|                              | TOTAL           | 131 |
| THOMASTOWN                   | BENNETSBRIDGE   | 1   |
|                              | GLENMORE        | 1   |
|                              | GORESBRIDGE     | 2   |
|                              | GRAIGUENAMANAGH | 4   |
|                              | KILMACOW        | 1   |
|                              | KILMOGANNY      | 1   |
|                              | MOONCOIN        | 11  |
|                              | MULLINAVAT      | 2   |
|                              | PILTOWN         | 1   |
|                              | THOMASTOWN      | 33  |
|                              | TOTAL           | 57  |
| KILKENNY/CARLOW              | 22 Stations     | 297 |

## **Garda Deployment**

89. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in the Dublin northern metropolitan region on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to the Dublin northern metropolitan region; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34732/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 41 and 45 have been assigned to the DMR North Division and the DMR North Central Division respectively. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the DMR North Division and the DMR North Central Divisions, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the DMR North

Questions - Written Answers

Division and the DMR North Central Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| DMR NORTH 31 OCT 2010 |                |               |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Division              | Stations       | Garda Numbers |
| BALBRIGGAN            | BALBRIGGAN     | 67            |
|                       | GARRISTOWN     | 3             |
|                       | LUSK           | 7             |
|                       | RUSH           | 6             |
|                       | SKERRIES       | 11            |
|                       | TOTAL          | 94            |
| BALLYMUN              | BALLYMUN       | 129           |
|                       | DUBLIN AIRPORT | 22            |
|                       | SANTRY         | 83            |
|                       | WHITEHALL      | 49            |
|                       | TOTAL          | 283           |
| COOLOCK               | COOLOCK        | 120           |
|                       | MALAHIDE       | 38            |
|                       | SWORDS         | 84            |
|                       | Total          | 242           |
| RAHENY                | CLONTARF       | 80            |
|                       | HOWTH          | 41            |
|                       | RAHENY         | 74            |
|                       | TOTAL          | 195           |
| DMR NORTH             | 15 Stations    | 814           |

| DMR NORTH CENTRAL 31 OCT 2010 |                      |     |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----|
| BRIDEWELL                     | BRIDEWELL            | 179 |
|                               | FIXED PENALTY OFFICE | 1   |
|                               | TOTAL                | 180 |
| FITZGIBBON STREET             | FITZGIBBON STREET    | 117 |
|                               | MOUNTJOY             | 102 |
|                               | Total                | 219 |
| STORE STREET                  | IMMIGRATION D/DOCKS  | 8   |
|                               | STORE STREET         | 295 |
|                               | TOTAL                | 303 |
| DMR NORTH CENTRAL             | 6 Stations           | 702 |

| DMR NORTH 30 SEPT 2016 |            |               |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Division               | Stations   | Garda Numbers |
| BALBRIGGAN             | BALBRIGGAN | 68            |
|                        | GARRISTOWN | 2             |
|                        | LUSK       | 10            |
|                        | SKERRIES   | 9             |
|                        | TOTAL      | 89            |
| BALLYMUN               | BALLYMUN   | 118           |

| DMR NORTH 30 SEPT 2016 |                |     |
|------------------------|----------------|-----|
|                        | DUBLIN AIRPORT | 20  |
|                        | SANTRY         | 83  |
|                        | TOTAL          | 221 |
| COOLOCK                | COOLOCK        | 102 |
|                        | MALAHIDE       | 31  |
|                        | SWORDS         | 67  |
|                        | TOTAL          | 200 |
| RAHENY                 | CLONTARF       | 70  |
|                        | HOWTH          | 27  |
|                        | RAHENY         | 68  |
| RAHENY                 | TOTAL          | 165 |
| DMR NORTH              | 13 Stations    | 675 |

| DMR NORTH CENTRAL 30 SEPT 2016 |                     |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Division                       | Stations            | Garda Numbers |
| BRIDEWELL                      | BRIDEWELL           | 155           |
|                                | TOTAL               | 155           |
| FITZGIBBON STREET              | MOUNTJOY            | 191           |
|                                | TOTAL               | 191           |
| STORE STREET                   | IMMIGRATION D/DOCKS | 3             |
|                                | STORE STREET        | 255           |
|                                | TOTAL               | 258           |
| DMR NORTH CENTRAL              | 4 Stations          | 604           |

### Garda Industrial Relations

90. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if the budget allocation for her Department will be sufficient to allow for the recent deal with the GRA and the AGSI; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34739/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, following intensive negotiations between the Government, the Garda Representative Association (GRA) and Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission, the Labour Court issued a recommendation on 3 November last in relation to the dispute. In the case of individual members, the recommendation for the GRA and AGSI would provide extra remuneration of around €4,000 on average to a member of the Service over the next 12 months through:

- an increase in the value of the rent allowance by €500 bringing it to €4,655 per annum with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the integration of the rent allowance in the new amount of €4,655 into salary with consequential increases in unsocial hours and overtime payments also with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the introduction of a €15 premium payment per annual leave day to compensate for the uncertainty attaching to the taking of leave by Gardaí. This payment will be worth €510 per annum to a Garda with 34 days annual leave;

- the implementation of a long-standing recommendation of the Garda Inspectorate through the introduction of paid 15 minute pre-tour briefing or tasking sessions with effect from 1 January 2017.

Under the Labour Court recommendation, new recruits who do not currently receive rent allowance, will have it restored, in addition to the other improvements I just listed. In addition, the increment freeze in place for GRA members since 1 July will be lifted and any arrears arising from increments foregone will be paid.

The Government has also made it clear that it is committed to introducing legislative change to give the Garda Associations the right of access to the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court.

On foot of the Labour Court recommendation, the GRA and AGSI agreed to defer the intended industrial action over the course of the four Fridays in November to facilitate a ballot of their membership. This was a very welcome decision by the Garda associations and has ensured that a full policing service remains in place.

The Government fully respects the decision of the Labour Court as the independent industrial relations body of last resort in the State and agreed last week to accept its recommendation. The outcome of the process is now being examined in detail by all sides and it is hoped that it will form the basis for a final resolution of this dispute following the balloting of members of AGSI and the GRA in due course.

The independent recommendation of the Labour Court seeks to address the concerns that have been articulated by the representative bodies in relation to their pay and conditions including of new recruits, and their access to the statutory dispute resolution bodies. The nature of the Labour Court's recommendation is such that some of the cost of the implementation of the proposals, if they are accepted by the members of AGSI and the GRA, depend on the amount of overtime worked in any year. That said, I am advised that, depending on a number of variables, the estimated gross annual cost of implementing the Labour Court Recommendation could exceed €50m; however, this gross cost will be offset by statutory deductions for tax, PRSI, etc., which will reduce the net Exchequer cost.

Once the outcome of the ballots is known and if the proposals are accepted, the additional budgetary cost will be the subject of discussions between my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

What is most important at this juncture is that members of AGSI and the GRA are afforded the time and space to give the Labour Court's recommendation the detailed consideration that it deserves.

### **Garda Industrial Relations**

91. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her efforts in relation to resolving pending industrial relations disputes at An Garda Síochána; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31004/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, following intensive negotiations between the Government, the Garda Representative Association (GRA) and Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission, the Labour Court issued a recommendation on 3 November last in relation to the dispute. In the case of individual members, the rec-

ommendation for the GRA and AGSI would provide extra remuneration of around €4,000 on average to a member of the Service over the next 12 months through:

- an increase in the value of the rent allowance by €500 bringing it to €4,655 per annum with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the integration of the rent allowance in the new amount of €4,655 into salary with consequential increases in unsocial hours and overtime payments also with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the introduction of a €15 premium payment per annual leave day to compensate for the uncertainty attaching to the taking of leave by Gardaí. This payment will be worth €510 per annum to a Garda with 34 days annual leave;

- the implementation of a long-standing recommendation of the Garda Inspectorate through the introduction of paid 15 minute pre-tour briefing or tasking sessions with effect from 1 January 2017.

Under the Labour Court recommendation, new recruits who do not currently receive rent allowance, will have it restored, in addition to the other improvements I just listed. In addition, the increment freeze in place for GRA members since 1 July will be lifted and any arrears arising from increments foregone will be paid.

The Government has also made it clear that it is committed to introducing legislative change to give the Garda Associations the right of access to the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court.

On foot of the Labour Court recommendation, the GRA and AGSI agreed to defer the intended industrial action over the course of the four Fridays in November to facilitate a ballot of their membership. This was a very welcome decision by the Garda associations and has ensured that a full policing service remains in place.

The Government fully respects the decision of the Labour Court as the independent industrial relations body of last resort in the State and agreed last week to accept its recommendation. The outcome of the process is now being examined in detail by all sides and it is hoped that it will form the basis for a final resolution of this dispute following the balloting of members of AGSI and the GRA in due course.

The independent recommendation of the Labour Court seeks to address the concerns that have been articulated by the representative bodies in relation to their pay and conditions including of new recruits, and their access to the statutory dispute resolution bodies.

What is most important at this juncture is that members of AGSI and the GRA are afforded the time and space to give the Labour Court's recommendation the detailed consideration that it deserves.

## Surveillance Operations

92. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the representations the State has made regarding UK surveillance of Internet traffic to and from Ireland; and the EU rules that govern the regulation of such monitoring of information passing between and through members states. [32082/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am sure



the House shares my view that the protection of data and the privacy of communications are not matters which should be taken lightly and it is right that communications are safeguarded and protected against unlawful intrusion and interception.

That said, the lawful interception of communications is sometimes a necessary tool for law enforcement authorities in order to protect citizens against terrorism and other serious criminal threats. The majority of citizens would accept that there should be a balance between personal privacy and public safety once the mechanisms by which such data is accessed is both legal and proportionate.

I want to emphasise that the interception of an individual's communications in this State can only occur in the very specific circumstances laid down in the Interception of Postal Packets and Telecommunications Messages (Regulation) Act of 1993. This Act permits me to authorise an interception but only for the purposes of criminal investigation into serious offences or in the interests of the security of the State. The operation of the Act is overseen independently by a Designated Judge of the High Court who reports to the Taoiseach on his examination of its operation. In addition, a Complaints Referee (a serving judge of the Circuit Court) receives and investigates complaints from persons who believe that their communications have been unlawfully intercepted. If the Complaints Referee finds that there has been a violation of the Act he can order that the interceptions cease and recommend the award of compensation.

The interception of communications is not a matter that is regulated at EU level. However, arrangements are in place under the EU Mutual Assistance Convention which provide for the implementation of reciprocal interception arrangements in the context of criminal investigations. The Convention is given effect in Irish law in the Criminal Justice (Mutual Assistance) Act 2008.

The Deputy will be aware of reports early last year which alleged that authorities in the UK had accessed communications cables between this State and the UK. The reports suggest that this access may have been connected to surveillance activities being carried out within the jurisdiction of the UK. At that time, my colleague the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade was in contact with the British Embassy on this issue. It has been conveyed that it is generally understood that friendly relationships between States include the acceptance of the principle that the privacy of communications must be respected.

### **Crime Levels**

93. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for counties Cavan and Monaghan are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in counties Cavan and Monaghan have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34667/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for counties Cavan and Monaghan reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for those counties.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardai directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division       | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|----------------|--|
| Cavan/Monaghan | Dowra  |
|                | Rockcorry  |
|                | Ballinagh  |
|                | Swanlinbar   |
|                | Killeshandra   |

#### **Direct Provision System**

94. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans for changing the system of direct provision; and if she will make a statement on the

matter. [34853/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Report of the Working Group on Improvements to the protection process including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers provides a template for the development and improvement of a wide range of services being delivered to those seeking international protection.

One of the key recommendations of the Report was the introduction of a single application procedure in the protection process. The International Protection Act 2015 provides for such a procedure. My Department is currently preparing all of the steps necessary to commence the Act which responds to some 26 of the Working Group's recommendations and can be expected to positively address the crucial issue of the length of time that applicants spend in the protection process and by extension in State provided accommodation.

On this particular point, significant efforts have been made to deal with those who are longest in the system and at this stage the vast majority of those who are over 5 years in the system and who do not have any impediments to progress, such as pending judicial challenges, have now had their cases processed to completion. This has been a key achievement that has had a real impact on many people and families in the protection process.

A transition Task Force was established in 2015 and put in place important supports to facilitate people with status moving into and integrating with the community. The Task Force reported that 87% of people granted status had moved into the wider community within six months.

Tangible progress in improving the daily lives of asylum seekers living in State provided accommodation while their application is being processed is also being made. In January last, the former Tánaiste announced an increase to the Direct Provision Allowance for children, the first such increase since the introduction of the payment some sixteen years ago. Prescription fees for all those in receipt of the Direct Provision allowance, including children, have also been waived. The Minister for Education and Skills has also announced a second year of their pilot support scheme for students in the protection system for the academic year 2016/2017.

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department, which is responsible for the management and administration of accommodation and ancillary services to protection applicants in state provided accommodation, is actively progressing the implementation of other recommendations in the Report around access to cooking facilities and the increase in living space for those who avail of State provided accommodation. Pilot projects are being undertaken in a number of centres to ensure the best approach to realising these objectives and ensuring that those residing in the direct provision system continue to be treated with respect and dignity.

RIA are also working on the development of standards for the provision and maintenance of services in accommodation centres, enhancing the complaints mechanisms for residents of those centres and the provision of ongoing diversity and equality training and awareness programmes across all centres.

## **Crime Levels**

95. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for County Clare are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in County Clare have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34682/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for County Clare reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that county.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardai directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Division  | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
| Co. Clare | Crusheen   |

| Division | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|----------|--|
|          | Lissycasey   |
|          | Kildysart  |
|          | Tulla  |
|          | Ballyvaughan   |

### Public Order Offences

96. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will review, amend and strengthen the trespass laws to protect the rights of land and property owners; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34402/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Trespass is a civil wrong and, for the most part, falls to be addressed by means of a civil remedy.

Trespass may be dealt with under criminal law in certain circumstances and a range of offences are provided for in legislation.

The Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994, as amended, contains provisions specifically relating to the unauthorised entry onto and occupation of land. Part IIA of that Act, comprising sections 19A to 19H, as inserted by the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002, provides for offences in relation to illegal trespass and occupation of land. Such land includes privately owned land and public land provided or maintained by a statutory body or held in trust primarily for the enjoyment of the public. The legislation empowers the Garda Síochána to direct trespassers to leave the land concerned and remove any object belonging to them from the occupied land. A person who is guilty of an offence under this Part of the Act is liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to €4,000 or a term of imprisonment of up to one month, or both.

Trespass in relation to buildings, as well as land, is also dealt with in the 1994 Act. Section 11 of the Act provides that it is an offence for a person to enter a building or the vicinity of a building as a trespasser with the intention of committing an offence or interfering with property. A person who is guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to €2,500 or imprisonment for a term of up to 6 months, or both.

In addition, section 13(1) of the same Act provides that it is an offence for a person, without reasonable excuse, to trespass on a building or in the vicinity of a building in such a manner as causes or is likely to cause fear in another person. Section 13(2) empowers the Garda Síochána to request the person concerned to desist from acting in such a manner and to immediately leave the place concerned in a peaceable and orderly manner. It is an offence not to comply with a direction given by a member of the Garda Síochána under section 13(2). A person who is guilty of an offence under section 13(1) is liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to €2,500 or imprisonment for a term of up to 12 months, or both. A person who is guilty of an offence under section 13(2) is liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to €1,000 or imprisonment for a term of up to 6 months, or both.

The Prohibition of Forcible Entry and Occupation Act 1971 also contains provisions relating to trespass. Under this Act it is an offence to forcibly enter land, including buildings, or remain in forceful occupation, or to encourage or advocate the commission of such an offence. A person guilty of a first offence under the Act is liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to €500 or imprisonment for a term of up to 6 months, or both. A second or subsequent offence



under the Act is punishable, on summary conviction, by a fine of up to €1,000 or imprisonment for term of up to 12 months, or both. Conviction on indictment for an offence under the Act can result in a fine of up to €5,000 or a prison term of up to 3 years, or both.

As I have outlined, there is already robust legislation in place in relation to trespass and I have, therefore, no plans to change the law in this regard, but the situation will be kept under review.

### **Garda Deployment**

97. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each in County Laois on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to County Laois; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34722/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. Co. Laois is part of the Laois/Offaly Garda Division. I am informed that of the 534 newly attested Gardaí, 24 have been assigned to that Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and classroom based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be



aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Laois/Offaly Division, like all other Garda Divisions, will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Laois/Offaly Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| LAOIS/OFFALY DIVISION 31 OCT 2016 |                  |               |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Division                          | Stations         | Garda Numbers |
| ABBEYLEIX                         | ABBEYLEIX        | 28            |
|                                   | ARLES            | 2             |
|                                   | BALLACOLLA       | 1             |
|                                   | BALLINAKILL      | 1             |
|                                   | BALLYLINAN       | 4             |
|                                   | BORRIS-IN-OSSORY | 1             |
|                                   | DURROW           | 2             |
|                                   | RATHDOWNEY       | 4             |
|                                   | TOTAL            | 43            |
|                                   | BIRR             | BANAGHER      |
| BIRR                              |                  | 29            |
| CLOGHAN                           |                  | 1             |
| FERBANE                           |                  | 5             |
| KILCORMAC                         |                  | 2             |
| KINNITTY                          |                  | 1             |
| SHANNONBRIDGE                     |                  | 1             |
| SHINRONE                          |                  | 2             |
| TOTAL                             |                  | 46            |
| PORTLAOISE                        |                  | CLONASLEE     |
|                                   | MOUNTMELICK      | 7             |
|                                   | MOUNTRATH        | 4             |
|                                   | PORTARLINGTON    | 14            |
|                                   | PORTLAOISE       | 114           |
|                                   | STRADBALLY       | 2             |
|                                   | TOTAL            | 143           |
| TULLAMORE                         | CLARA            | 5             |
|                                   | CLONBOLOGUE      | 0             |
|                                   | DAINGEAN         | 2             |
|                                   | EDENDERRY        | 13            |
|                                   | GEASHILL         | 0             |
|                                   | RHODE            | 2             |
|                                   | TULLAMORE        | 80            |
| TOTAL                             | 102              |               |

| LAOIS/OFFALY DIVISION 31 OCT 2016 |             |     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----|
| LAOIS/OFFALY                      | 29 Stations | 334 |

| LAOIS/OFFALY DIVISION 30 SEP 2016 |             |               |    |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------|----|
| Division                          | Stations    | Garda Numbers |    |
| BIRR                              | BANAGHER    | 5             |    |
|                                   | BIRR        | 28            |    |
|                                   | CLOGHAN     | 1             |    |
|                                   | FERBANE     | 4             |    |
|                                   | KILCORMAC   | 2             |    |
|                                   | KINNITTY    | 1             |    |
|                                   | SHINRONE    | 1             |    |
|                                   | TOTAL       | 42            |    |
|                                   | PORTLAOISE  | ABBEYLEIX     | 20 |
|                                   |             | ARLES         | 1  |
| BALLYLINAN                        |             | 2             |    |
| BORRIS-IN-OSSORY                  |             | 1             |    |
| CLONASLEE                         |             | 1             |    |
| DURROW                            |             | 1             |    |
| MOUNTMELICK                       |             | 6             |    |
| MOUNTRATH                         |             | 3             |    |
| PORTARLINGTON                     |             | 13            |    |
| PORTLAOISE                        |             | 107           |    |
| RATHDOWNEY                        |             | 2             |    |
| STRADBALLY                        |             | 2             |    |
| TOTAL                             |             | 159           |    |
| TULLAMORE                         |             | CLARA         | 4  |
|                                   |             | DAINGEAN      | 2  |
|                                   | EDENDERRY   | 13            |    |
|                                   | RHODE       | 1             |    |
|                                   | TULLAMORE   | 73            |    |
| TOTAL                             | 93          |               |    |
| LAOIS / OFFALY                    | 24 Stations | 294           |    |

### Crime Levels

98. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for the Dublin southern metropolitan region are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in Dublin southern metropolitan region have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34733/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for the Dublin southern metropolitan region reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that area.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardai directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division                  | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|---------------------------|--|
| Dublin South Metropolitan | None   |

### Crime Levels

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

recorded crime statistics for counties Carlow and Kilkenny are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in counties Carlow and Kilkenny have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34660/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for Carlow and Kilkenny reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for those counties.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that the majority of crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge at that stage the extent of how successful the ongoing work has been to achieve improvements to the quality of crime data.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division        | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|-----------------|--|
| Carlow/Kilkenny | Ballon   |
|                 | Myshall  |
|                 | Hacketstown  |
|                 | Glenmore   |
|                 | Kilmacow   |
|                 | Freshford  |
|                 | Goresbridge  |
|                 | Stoneyford   |
|                 | Ballyhale  |
|                 | Kilmoganny   |
|                 | Piltown  |

### Crime Levels

100. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for County Wicklow are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in County Wicklow have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34708/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for County Wicklow reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that county.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardai directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Division   | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
| Co Wicklow | Shillelagh   |

### Commissions of Investigation

101. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she proposes to take action to enable GSOC complete its investigation into matters arising from the O’Higgins commission of investigation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34837/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy is aware, on 16 June 2016 I made a referral to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission under section 102(5) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 concerning certain allegations which arose following the publication of the final report of the O’Higgins Commission of Investigation.

Obviously I have to be careful not to say anything which might interfere with the investigation currently underway by GSOC. As the Deputy is aware, the Chairperson of GSOC wrote to me seeking access to certain records of the O’Higgins Commission of Investigation. In view of the provisions of the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004 concerning confidentiality of evidence given before a Commission of Investigation, I sought the advice of the Attorney General on the matter. Having received the Attorney General’s advice I wrote to the Chairperson of GSOC pointing out that access to the records in question can be sought through an application to court for an order directing that the material be provided. So, I would say to the Deputy that I have taken what action is open to me at this stage to assist GSOC to complete its investigation. It is now a matter for GSOC how to proceed.

While the granting of any such order is a matter for the Courts, I will, of course, comply with any such court order, if it is made.

Accordingly, as the GSOC investigation is on-going, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter.



## **Garda Deployment**

102. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each station in counties Sligo and Leitrim on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to counties Sligo and Leitrim; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34730/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 5 have been assigned to the Sligo/Leitrim Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Sligo/Leitrim Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Sligo/Leitrim

Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| SLIGO/LEITRIM 31 OCT 2010 |                    |               |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Division                  | Stations           | Garda Numbers |
| BALLYMOTE                 | ACLARE             | 2             |
|                           | BALLYFARNAN        | 1             |
|                           | BALLYMOTE          | 28            |
|                           | BUNNANADDEN        | 1             |
|                           | EASKEY             | 2             |
|                           | ENNISCRONE         | 4             |
|                           | GURTEEN            | 2             |
|                           | RIVERSTOWN         | 2             |
|                           | TUBBERCURRY        | 7             |
|                           | TOTAL              | 49            |
| CARRICK-ON-SHANNON        | BALLINAMORE        | 6             |
|                           | CARRICK-ON-SHANNON | 45            |
|                           | CARRIGALLEN        | 1             |
|                           | CLOONE             | 1             |
|                           | DROMOD             | 1             |
|                           | KESHCARRIGAN       | 1             |
|                           | MOHILL             | 5             |
|                           | TOTAL              | 60            |
| MANORHAMILTON             | DROMAHAIR          | 3             |
|                           | DRUMKERRIN         | 3             |
|                           | DRUMSHAMBO         | 4             |
|                           | GLENFARNE          | 1             |
|                           | KILTYCLOGHER       | 2             |
|                           | KINLOUGH           | 5             |
|                           | MANORHAMILTON      | 21            |
|                           | TOTAL              | 39            |
| SLIGO                     | CLIFFONEY          | 1             |
|                           | COLLOONEY          | 5             |
|                           | COOLANEY           | 1             |
|                           | GRANGE             | 2             |
|                           | ROSSES POINT       | 2             |
|                           | SKREEN             | 1             |
|                           | SLIGO              | 166           |
|                           | TOTAL              | 178           |
| SLIGO/LEITRIM             | 30 Stations        | 326           |

| SLIGO/LEITRIM 30 SEPT 2016 |            |               |
|----------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Division                   | Stations   | Garda Numbers |
| BALLYMOTE                  | BALLYMOTE  | 29            |
|                            | ENNISCRONE | 7             |
|                            | GURTEEN    | 2             |

| SLIGO/LEITRIM 30 SEPT 2016 |                    |     |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-----|
|                            | RIVERSTOWN         | 3   |
|                            | TUBBERCURRY        | 8   |
|                            | TOTAL              | 49  |
| LEITRIM                    | BALLINAMORE        | 7   |
|                            | CARRICK-ON-SHANNON | 49  |
|                            | CARRIGALLEN        | 2   |
|                            | DRUMSHAMBO         | 6   |
|                            | KINLOUGH           | 5   |
|                            | MANORHAMILTON      | 22  |
|                            | MOHILL             | 6   |
|                            | TOTAL              | 97  |
| SLIGO                      | COLLOONEY          | 5   |
|                            | GRANGE             | 6   |
|                            | ROSSES POINT       | 1   |
|                            | SKREEN             | 1   |
|                            | SLIGO              | 133 |
|                            | TOTAL              | 146 |
| SLIGO/LEITRIM              | 17 Stations        | 292 |

### Crime Levels

103. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for Cork city are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in Cork city have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34693/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for Cork city reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that area.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardai directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Division  | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
| Cork City | None   |

### Equality Legislation

104. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the steps her Department is taking to introduce socio-economic status as a discrimination ground following legislative and case law trends across Europe and to ensure Ireland meets its obligations under EU and international law, such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (Article 21) and recommendations from Ireland's second UN universal periodic review; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34565/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I do not have plans at this stage to introduce socio-economic status as a discrimination ground in equality legislation. As reported upon by Ireland during its response to the UN's Universal Periodic Review earlier this year, on 19 May 2015 the Oireachtas did not support a Private Members' Bill that sought to insert into the Constitution a statement that the State shall progressively realise, subject to its maximum available resources and without discrimination, the rights contained in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and that this duty would be cognisable by the Courts. The Government pointed out that it aims to ensure that the State's obligations to implement the Covenant in Ireland are met through policies aimed at improving the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including by fighting persistent poverty and social exclusion and recognising that others - including individuals and families as well as many organisations and bodies - have important responsibilities as well. The means by which the State sets out to meet its obligations in this area is through the allocation of resources.

### **Traveller Community**

105. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will introduce legislation that will provide for the legal recognition of Traveller ethnicity with a view to creating the conditions for a rights-based approach and to address the marginalisation of the Traveller community; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34850/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton) (Deputy David Stanton):** There is a comprehensive consultation process underway, led by my Department, to develop a new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy to improve the situation for the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. Phase 1 (identification of key themes for the new Strategy) and Phase 2 (identification and agreement of high level objectives under each agreed theme) of that consultation process have been completed. The final phase, Phase 3 (identification of detailed actions to achieve each agreed objective, with associated time-scales, key performance indicators, institutional responsibilities and monitoring arrangements), is currently underway. This process will provide a new set of specific, cross-Departmental actions that need to be taken to bring about a real improvement in quality of life for Travellers and Roma. It is intended that the new Inclusion Strategy will run from 2016 to 2020 and that it will be in place later this year. As part of Phase 3, regional public consultations took place from 22 September 2016 - 27 September 2016; I attended two of those consultations (in Dublin and in Athlone, respectively) and I am delighted to report that overall attendance and participation were encouraging and positive. Feedback from those consultation sessions is being collated by my officials and the draft Inclusion Strategy will be updated accordingly. I plan to submit the final draft of the Inclusion Strategy to Government shortly for consideration and sign-off.

The issue of recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group is being considered in the context of the development of the Inclusion Strategy. In September 2015, my predecessor brought a paper to Cabinet Committee on Social Policy on the question of recognising Travellers as a distinct ethnic group within Irish society. This followed a process of dialogue with the national-level Traveller NGOs during 2015, which culminated in the presentation of an agreed position paper by them and confirmation that there are no legal or legislative or expenditure implications arising from such recognition. As such, there are no plans to introduce new legislation in this regard. The key benefit is that recognition of the distinct heritage, culture and identity of Travellers and their special place in Irish society would be hugely symbolically important to Traveller pride, to Traveller self-esteem and to overcoming the legacy of marginalisation and discrimination that the community has experienced. Such a symbolic gesture – as the Traveller NGO paper argues – creates a new platform for positive engagement by the Traveller community and Government together in seeking sustainable solutions based on respect and honest dialogue.

I have had a long standing interest in this area, most notably through my chairing of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality when it produced its report on the Recognition of Traveller Ethnicity (April 2014). When I spoke earlier this year at the Traveller Pride awards, I stressed that we need to broaden the discussion on this issue. The debate needs to be taken forward in an inclusive way. My officials and I are currently working to advance this issue with national Traveller organisations in this regard.

### **Garda Deployment**

106. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each station in County Waterford on 31



October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to County Waterford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34698/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 24 have been assigned to the Waterford Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Waterford Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Waterford Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.



Questions - Written Answers

| WATERFORD DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 | Stations        | Garda Numbers |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| DUNGARVAN DISTRICT             | AGLISH          | 1             |
|                                | ARDMORE         | 2             |
|                                | BALLYDUFF       | 2             |
|                                | BALLYMACARBERRY | 2             |
|                                | CAPPOQUIN       | 2             |
|                                | DUNGARVAN       | 49            |
|                                | LISMORE         | 5             |
|                                | RING            | 1             |
|                                | TALLOW          | 3             |
|                                | TOTAL           | 67            |
| TRAMORE DISTRICT               | KILL            | 1             |
|                                | KILMACTHOMAS    | 5             |
|                                | KILMEADEN       | 2             |
|                                | LEAMYBRIEN      | 1             |
|                                | PORTLAW         | 3             |
|                                | RATHGORMACK     | 1             |
|                                | STRADBALLY      | 0             |
|                                | TRAMORE         | 37            |
|                                | TOTAL           | 50            |
| WATERFORD DISTRICT             | DUNMORE EAST    | 2             |
|                                | FERRYBANK       | 6             |
|                                | PASSAGE EAST    | 1             |
|                                | WATERFORD       | 179           |
|                                | TOTAL           | 188           |
| WATERFORD TOTAL                | 21 Stations     | 305           |

| WATERFORD DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 | Stations     | Garda Numbers |
|---------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| DUNGARVAN DISTRICT              | AGLISH       | 1             |
|                                 | ARDMORE      | 1             |
|                                 | CAPPOQUIN    | 2             |
|                                 | DUNGARVAN    | 42            |
|                                 | LISMORE      | 4             |
|                                 | TALLOW       | 2             |
|                                 | TOTAL        | 52            |
| TRAMORE DISTRICT                | KILMACTHOMAS | 10            |
|                                 | TRAMORE      | 35            |
|                                 | TOTAL        | 45            |
| WATERFORD DISTRICT              | DUNMORE EAST | 2             |
|                                 | FERRYBANK    | 5             |
|                                 | PASSAGE EAST | 1             |
|                                 | WATERFORD    | 176           |
|                                 | TOTAL        | 184           |
| WATERFORD TOTAL                 | 12 Stations  | 281           |

## **Prisoner Welfare**

107. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the steps she has taken to deal with the concerns of the UN special rapporteur on torture in relation to the numbers of prisoners here being kept in solitary confinement for extended periods, well in excess of the UN recommended 15 day limit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34559/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I can advise the Deputy that the restriction of a prisoner's regime can occur due to a number of factors including the protection of vulnerable prisoners. This is provided for under Rule 63 of the Prison Rules 2007. A prisoner may, either at his/her own request or when the Governor considers it necessary, in so far as is practicable and subject to the maintenance and good order and safe and secure custody, be kept separate from other prisoners who are reasonably likely to cause significant harm to him/her.

In addition, the Governor may decide, for the maintenance of good order in the prison, to remove a prisoner from general association or structured activity to reduce the negative effect that a prisoner or prisoners may have on the general population. This is provided for under Rule 62 of the Prison Rules 2007. There may also be a smaller number of prisoners who would be restricted for medical (Rule 64) or discipline reasons (Rule 67).

The Irish Prison Service Statistics Unit commenced the collation of a Quarterly Census of Restricted Regime Prisoners in 2013. Since the commencement of the survey in July 2013, the number of prisoners on 22/23 hour lock up has decreased by 180 or 85 % from 211 to 31.

I am advised by the Director General of the Irish Prison Service, that the Irish Prison Service has established a high level group to look at measures which can be introduced to reduce the number of prisoners currently held on restricted regimes with a view to ensuring that all receive, as a minimum standard, out of cell time of 3 hours per day, to engage in exercise or activity.

In addition, this Group is to draft a Policy with the aim of seeking to eliminate 22/23 hour lock up from the Irish prison system. The Group has been tasked with presenting the Director General with a draft Policy in January 2017.

I can advise the Deputy that the Irish Prison Service publish the Census of Restricted Regime Prisoners on their website ([www.irishprisons.ie](http://www.irishprisons.ie)). Restricted Regimes Policy seeks to ensure prisoner access to meaningful activities including Education, Work Training, Gym and Recreation in out of cell time and also provide the prisoner with access to phone calls and visits in accordance with Incentivised Regime levels.

I can also advise the Deputy that the Irish Prison Service is making significant progress in addressing the various undertakings given in response to the findings and recommendations of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) Report of 2014.

## **Crime Levels**

108. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for County Waterford are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in County Waterford have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34697/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for County Waterford reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that county.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardai directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to implement the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in the Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division      | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|---------------|--|
| Co. Waterford | Passage East   |
|               | Ballymacarberry  |
|               | Aglish   |
|               | An Rinn  |
|               | Kill   |
|               | Kilmeaden  |
|               | Rathgormack  |
|               | Leamybrien   |

### Garda Deployment

109. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the position of County Kildare in comparison to other counties in terms of the number of gardaí per head of population; and if, as expected, County Kildare lies towards the bottom of that list, the measures being taken to address the shortfall of gardaí vis-à-vis other counties. [34752/16]

**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 I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

Ratios such as number of Garda per head population are not an appropriate tool to use when considering the allocation of Garda resources as they fail to take account of, among other things, the fact that crime levels and types can vary significantly among communities of similar population size. I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that in regard to the deployment of Garda personnel, a distribution model is used which takes into account all relevant factors including population, crime trends and the policing needs of each individual Garda Division. It is the responsibility of the Divisional Officer to allocate personnel within his/her Division.

I am further informed that the Garda strength of the Kildare Division, on the 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 307. There are also 23 Garda Reserves and 26 civilians attached to the Division. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation (NBCI), the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (formerly the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation) and the Garda National Drugs and Organise Crime Bureau.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the

Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 25 have been assigned to the Kildare Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Kildare Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

### **Policing Authority**

110. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality when she proposes to mandate the Policing Authority to carry out a review of Garda districts in accordance with the confidence and supply agreement. [34740/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Deputy will be aware that the Government has, in its Programme for a Partnership Government, recognised community policing as the embodiment of An Garda Síochána, providing a means of recognising that every community, both urban and rural, has its own concerns and expectations. It commits the Government to ensuring visible, effective and responsive policing in every community, including the most minimal response times possible.

I can confirm that, in support of this objective and in accordance with the confidence and supply agreement with his party, I have asked the Policing Authority to oversee a review of, among other things, both the boundaries of Garda districts and the dispersal of Garda stations in rural areas.

I understand that the Authority has, in accordance with section 117(2) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, formally requested the Garda Síochána Inspectorate to examine the dispersal and use of resources available to the Garda Síochána in the delivery of policing services to local communities and to make recommendations to provide a more effective, visible and responsive

policing service. The Authority has informed the Inspectorate that the review should take account of:

- the changing environments in rural, developing urban and suburban areas;
- the views of local communities;
- the allocation to and deployment of Garda resources at the local policing level, including the use of the Garda Reserve, Garda facilities and Garda equipment; and
- relevant recommendations made in previous Inspectorate reports.

Separately, in line with the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment, I have requested the Garda Commissioner, while fully cognisant of her statutory functions in relation to the distribution of Garda resources in the State, to identify 6 stations, both urban and rural, for reopening on a pilot basis to determine possible positive impacts that such openings will have on criminal activity, with special emphasis on burglaries, theft and public order. It is intended that the results of the pilot scheme will feed into the wider review being overseen by the Authority.

### **Crime Levels**

111. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if recorded crime statistics for County Tipperary are an accurate reflection of the reality of crime in the area; if all Garda stations in County Tipperary have access to the PULSE system; if not, the details of the stations without access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34723/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Crime statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) based on PULSE data and the statistics for County Tipperary reflect all crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána for that county.

In recent times, the CSO has carried out two important reviews of the quality of crime statistics, following on concerns raised in the 2014 Report of the Garda Inspectorate on Crime Investigation. The outcome of these reviews are reflective of the quality of the crime figures for all areas of the country.

The first CSO Review, published in June 2015, helped to clarify and quantify many of the issues raised by the Inspectorate. The second review, published in September this year, indicated that the estimated impact of the issues identified in the Garda Inspectorate Report in relation to recorded crime is substantially less than at the first review. I am, however, determined that a strong focus remains on the need for improvements in this area.

I must explain that most crime incidents are recorded via the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), based in Castlebar. This provides a round the clock service which enables Gardaí to phone in details of a crime incident, and specially trained staff in GISC facilitate its correct recording and classification on PULSE. As a result, a lack of access to PULSE in a particular Garda station should not prevent the accurate recording of crime data. In fact, the latest information from the Garda authorities is that 92% of crime incidents are recorded via GISC, with the balance being recorded by Gardai directly on PULSE.

Some of the issues raised by the Garda Inspectorate concerned the need for procedures to ensure that the recording of crimes through GISC is maximised. As part of the work to imple-



ment the Inspectorate's very broad ranging recommendations, An Garda Síochána has implemented new measures to improve data quality including a new Incident Recording process. This, together with important upgrades of the PULSE system during 2015, is supporting the improvement of Garda crime data as well as procedures for the supervision of investigations.

It will take time for the full effect of the upgrading of Garda systems to be reflected in the Crime Statistics. In this regard, I understand that the CSO intend to provide further analysis of crime data quality in due course which will help us to gauge, at that stage, how successful the ongoing work to achieve improvements in our crime statistics has been.

For its part, the Government remains committed to supporting this work and this is underlined by the investment of €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In relation to the specific question of PULSE access for Garda stations, as a number of Deputies have sought similar information in relation to various counties, I propose to provide those Deputies with a table with this information and to include the table in Official Report.

I might add that the question of enhancing rural access to the Garda network is being examined as part of the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. This includes plans to introduce mobile technology solutions to enable operational Gardaí to access core information systems, including PULSE, while on duty and away from Garda stations.

However, as I have explained, the availability of PULSE in a given Garda station is not a prerequisite for the accurate recording and classification of crime data.

| Division      | Names of Garda Stations in these areas without access to PULSE |
|---------------|--|
| Co. Tipperary | Lorrha   |
|               | Ballingarry – Thurles  |
|               | Holycross  |
|               | Littleton  |
|               | Kilsheelan   |
|               | Mullinahone  |
|               | Ardfinnan  |
|               | Ballyporeen  |
|               | Ballingarry – Roscrea  |
|               | Cloughjordan   |
|               | Dolla  |
|               | Portroe  |
|               | Toomevara  |
|               | Templetuohy  |
|               | Moyne  |
|               | Templederry  |
|               | Shevry   |
|               | Moneygall  |
|               | Emly   |
|               | Golden   |
|               | Bansha   |

## Legislative Programme

112. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will introduce legislation to provide for the definition of sexual consent; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34831/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** During the recent Dáil Second Stage debate on the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015, a number of Deputies raised the issue of introducing a definition of consent to a sexual act. It had been my intention to bring forward legislative proposals to provide for a definition of sexual consent and to introduce such provision by way of an amendment to the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015. On 11 November, the Supreme Court delivered a judgment which addresses the issue of sexual consent. That judgment is currently being considered by my Department with a view to taking account of the decision of the Court in the final amendments.

### Bail Law

113. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if any evaluation has been carried out to assess the damage to the morale of An Garda Síochána arising from countless hours in pursuit of persons with, in some cases, hundreds of convictions for offences committed while on bail (details supplied); if she expects to take action on these issues in the near future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34829/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and there is no doubt but that the new resources which are now coming on stream will support the difficult work of An Garda Síochána in protecting our communities.

These additional resources will be backed by the introduction of new legislation. In July 2015, the Government announced plans to introduce a new Bail Bill. The Bill seeks to improve the operation of the bail system and make the law as effective as possible in protecting the public against crimes committed by persons on bail while also safeguarding the rights of the individual. The Bail Bill is being drafted on a priority basis with a view to its publication in the

current parliamentary session.

The Bill will meet the commitment in the Programme for Government to introduce and fast-track legislation providing for stricter bail terms for repeat serious offenders which will strengthen Garda powers to deal with breaches of bail, increase the use of curfews, and introduce electronic tagging for those on bail where requested by gardaí. Other provisions of the Bill will place clear new requirements on the courts in considering bail applications, including that the courts must have regard to persistent serious offending by an applicant before a decision on bail is taken.

### **Garda Deployment**

114. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each station in County Westmeath on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to County Westmeath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34681/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 10 have been assigned to the Westmeath Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Westmeath Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Westmeath Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| WESTMEATH DIVISION<br>31 OCT 2010 | Stations             | Garda Numbers |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| ATHLONE DISTRICT                  | ATHLONE              | 66            |
|                                   | BALLINAHOWN          | 1             |
|                                   | BALLYMORE            | 2             |
|                                   | GLASSON              | 2             |
|                                   | KILBEGGAN            | 4             |
|                                   | MOATE                | 17            |
|                                   | TOTAL                | 92            |
| MULLINGAR DISTRICT                | BALLYNACARGY         | 2             |
|                                   | CASTLEPOLLARD        | 3             |
|                                   | CASTLETOWN GEOGHEGAN | 1             |
|                                   | DELVIN               | 14            |
|                                   | FINEA                | 1             |
|                                   | KILLUCAN             | 5             |
|                                   | KINNEGAD             | 6             |
|                                   | MULLINGAR            | 132           |
|                                   | MULTYFARNHAM         | 1             |
|                                   | RATHOWEN             | 0             |
|                                   | ROCHFORTBRIDGE       | 5             |
|                                   | TOTAL                | 170           |
| WESTMEATH TOTAL                   | 17 Stations          | 262           |

| WESTMEATH DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 | Stations      | Garda Numbers |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| ATHLONE DISTRICT                | ATHLONE       | 69            |
|                                 | BALLYMORE     | 1             |
|                                 | GLASSON       | 2             |
|                                 | KILBEGGAN     | 2             |
|                                 | MOATE         | 15            |
|                                 | TOTAL         | 89            |
| MULLINGAR DISTRICT              | BALLYNACARGY  | 2             |
|                                 | CASTLEPOLLARD | 3             |
|                                 | DELVIN        | 8             |

| WESTMEATH DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 | Stations        | Garda Numbers |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
|                                 | KILLUCAN        | 3             |
|                                 | KINNEGAD        | 3             |
|                                 | MULLINGAR       | 134           |
|                                 | MULTYFARNHAM    | 1             |
|                                 | ROCHFORT-BRIDGE | 4             |
|                                 | TOTAL           | 158           |
| WESTMEATH TOTAL                 | 13 Stations     | 247           |

### Naturalisation Eligibility

115. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will publish the precise criteria on which she will grant or refuse naturalisation in the context of civil proceedings, arrests or spent convictions for minor offences; if persons are denied naturalisation on the grounds of spent convictions, particularly those that do not involve violence or fraud; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34844/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. All applications for a certificate of naturalisation are processed and assessed individually in accordance with the provisions of the Act. Section 15 of the Act provides that the Minister may, in her absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation if satisfied that certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. In particular, these conditions require that an applicant is of good character.

It would be neither possible or appropriate, given the wide range of possibilities, for me to publish precise criteria on how specific offences will be considered in any application, as each application is considered on its merits based on the entirety of the case presented at that time. To do so could be interpreted as a fettering of the absolute discretion given to the Minister in the Act. I can inform the Deputy that I am concerned to ensure that the threshold of what constitutes good character is, taking all things into account, maintained at an appropriate level and as such is fair to all applicants having regard to their particular circumstances.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. The fact that a person may have had an application refused does not preclude or disqualify them from submitting a fresh application in the future. Indeed, the letter advising an applicant of a negative decision also informs them that they may re-apply for the grant of a certificate of naturalisation at any time. The letter advises that, when considering making such a re-application, they should give due regard to the reasons for the refusal which were contained in the submission attached to the refusal letter and that any further application will be considered taking into account all statutory and administrative conditions applicable at the time of application.

The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and I know the Deputy will appreciate that it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

**Traveller Community**

116. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will consider setting up a Traveller agency which would work to deliver equality for the Traveller community; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34849/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton)** (**Deputy David Stanton**): In respect of the provision of accommodation for Travellers, the Government believes that the continued delivery of Traveller-specific accommodation through the provision of funding to local authorities in the Traveller Accommodation Programme, supported at national level by the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, continues to be the most suitable mechanism. The implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme of each local authority, including the draw-down of funds, in accordance with the 1998 Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, is a matter for each individual authority. I have no plans to establish a Traveller agency. My officials and I engage in an ongoing process of dialogue with the national-level Traveller NGOs. It is important to have positive engagement by the Traveller community and Government together in order to identify sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by the Traveller community, based on respect and honest dialogue.

There is a comprehensive consultation process underway, led by my Department, to develop a new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy to improve the situation for the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. Phase 1 (identification of key themes for the new Strategy) and Phase 2 (identification and agreement of high level objectives under each agreed theme) of that consultation process have been completed. The final phase, Phase 3 (identification of detailed actions to achieve each agreed objective, with associated time-scales, key performance indicators, institutional responsibilities and monitoring arrangements), is currently underway. This process will provide a new set of specific, cross-Departmental actions that need to be taken to bring about a real improvement in quality of life for Travellers and Roma. It is intended that the new Inclusion Strategy will run from 2016 to 2020 and that it will be in place later this year. As part of Phase 3, regional public consultations took place from 22 September 2016 - 27 September 2016; I attended two of those consultations (in Dublin and in Athlone, respectively) and I am delighted to report that overall attendance and participation were encouraging and positive. Feedback from those consultation sessions is being collated by my officials and the draft Inclusion Strategy will be updated accordingly. I plan to submit the final draft of the Inclusion Strategy to Government shortly for consideration and sign-off.

The issue of recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group is being considered in the context of the development of the Inclusion Strategy. In September 2015, my predecessor brought a paper to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy on the question of recognising Travellers as a distinct ethnic group within Irish society. This followed a process of dialogue with the national-level Traveller NGOs during 2015, which culminated in the presentation of an agreed position paper by them and confirmation that there are no legal or legislative or expenditure implications arising from such recognition. The key benefit is that recognition of the distinct heritage, culture and identity of Travellers and their special place in Irish society would be hugely symbolically important to Traveller pride, to Traveller self-esteem and to overcoming the legacy of marginalisation and discrimination that the community has experienced. Such a symbolic gesture – as the Traveller NGO paper argues – creates a new platform for positive engagement by the Traveller community and Government together in seeking sustainable solutions based on respect and honest dialogue.

I have had a long standing interest in this area, most notably through my chairing of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality when it produced its report on the



Recognition of Traveller Ethnicity (April 2014). When I spoke earlier this year at the Traveller Pride awards, I stressed that we need to broaden the discussion on this issue. The debate needs to be taken forward in an inclusive way. My officials and I are currently working to advance this issue with national Traveller organisations in this regard.

### **Refugee Resettlement Programme**

117. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she has raised with the Italian authorities the delays being experienced by Irish officials in Italy in the processing of Syrian refugees for relocation here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34751/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton) (Deputy David Stanton):** I wish to inform the Deputy that delays in operationalising the relocation Programme in Italy have arisen in relation to the need to put in place appropriate security screening of applicants for relocation. My Department, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, have engaged with the Italian authorities, and with the European Commission, in an attempt to resolve the ongoing issue in Italy. I have also intervened directly at Ministerial level to try to progress matters. The Deputy will I am sure appreciate that the Government must satisfy itself as to the suitability and eligibility of all applicants for relocation on all the grounds set out in the relevant EU Council decisions. I hope that the situation with Italy can be resolved in the near future so that we can fulfil the commitments made, but I want to be clear the situation has not arisen because of any inactivity or lack of urgency on the part of Ireland.

### **Garda Deployment**

118. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations and the number of gardaí in each station in County Wexford on 31 October 2010 and on 31 October 2016; the proportion of the proposed 800 additional recruits in 2017 that are likely to be assigned to County Wexford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34704/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An

Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 24 have been assigned to the Wexford Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

In so far as the allocation of newly attest Gardaí next year is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister has no direct role in it. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required structures and resources in place, including Garda tutors.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Wexford Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

For ease of reference I have provided a breakdown of the detailed information requested in relation to the number of Garda stations and number of Garda assigned to the Wexford Division on 31 October 2010 and 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, for the record.

| WEXFORD DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 | Stations          | Garda Numbers |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| ENNISCORTHY DISTRICT         | BLACKWATER        | 3             |
|                              | CLONROCHE         | 2             |
|                              | ENNISCORTHY       | 42            |
|                              | FERNS             | 3             |
|                              | KILTEALY          | 1             |
|                              | OULART            | 1             |
|                              | OYLEGATE          | 2             |
|                              | TOTAL             | 54            |
| GOREY DISTRICT               | BUNCLODY          | 8             |
|                              | COURTOWN HARBOUR  | 2             |
|                              | GOREY             | 55            |
|                              | TOTAL             | 65            |
| NEW ROSS DISTRICT            | BALLYCULLANE      | 2             |
|                              | BALLYWILLIAM      | 0             |
|                              | CAMPILE           | 2             |
|                              | CARRICK-ON-BANNOU | 1             |
|                              | CARRICKBYRNE      | 2             |
|                              | DUNCANNON         | 4             |
|                              | NEW ROSS          | 43            |
|                              | TOTAL             | 54            |

Questions - Written Answers

| WEXFORD DIVISION 31 OCT 2010 | Stations         | Garda Numbers |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| WEXFORD TOTAL                | BALDWINSTOWN     | 1             |
|                              | CASTLEBRIDGE     | 3             |
|                              | GLYNN            | 1             |
|                              | KILMORE QUAY     | 2             |
|                              | ROSSLARE HARBOUR | 7             |
|                              | ROSSLARE STRAND  | 2             |
|                              | TAGHMON          | 3             |
|                              | WEXFORD          | 93            |
|                              | TOTAL            | 112           |
| WEXFORD TOTAL                | 25 Stations      | 285           |

| WEXFORD DIVISION 30 SEPT 2016 | Stations          | Garda Numbers |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| ENNISCORTHY                   | BLACKWATER        | 2             |
|                               | BUNCLODY          | 7             |
|                               | CLONROCHE         | 2             |
|                               | COURTOWN HARBOUR  | 4             |
|                               | ENNISCORTHY       | 44            |
|                               | FERNS             | 2             |
|                               | GOREY             | 44            |
|                               | OULART            | 2             |
|                               | OYLEGATE          | 1             |
|                               | TOTAL             | 108           |
| NEW ROSS                      | BALLYCULLANE      | 1             |
|                               | CARRICKBYRNE      | 1             |
|                               | CARRICK-ON-BANNOW | 1             |
|                               | DUNCANNON         | 3             |
|                               | NEW ROSS          | 42            |
|                               | TOTAL             | 48            |
| WEXFORD                       | CASTLEBRIDGE      | 2             |
|                               | KILMORE QUAY      | 2             |
|                               | ROSSLARE HARBOUR  | 7             |
|                               | ROSSLARE STRAND   | 1             |
|                               | TAGHMON           | 2             |
|                               | WEXFORD           | 88            |
|                               | TOTAL             | 102           |
| WEXFORD TOTAL                 | 20 Stations       | 258           |

### Legal Aid

119. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if her attention has been drawn to the fact that persons at risk of domestic violence or who are victims of such violence must also pay contributions for legal aid and that victims of domestic violence may have avoided, or may be avoiding, the civil legal aid scheme for economic reasons; if her attention has been further drawn to the fact that victims of domestic violence may need to make recurring applications for legal aid which can be very costly, especially in view

of the increase in required financial contributions; and her plans to end the practice of requiring contributions from victims of domestic violence. [34827/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy is aware, the Legal Aid Board provides civil legal aid and advice to people who cannot afford to pay for a solicitor from their own resources. Applicants for civil legal aid and advice are required to meet the financial eligibility criteria under section 29 of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 and the Civil Legal Aid Regulations 1996 to 2016.

The vast majority of applicants granted legal aid and advice, including those seeking legal services in connection with domestic violence remedies, are also required to pay a contribution. However, section 29 (2) (b) of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 (as amended by Section 80 of the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008) provides that the Legal Aid Board may waive any contribution payable or accept a lower contribution on the grounds that a failure to do so would cause undue hardship to the applicant. The Legal Aid Board has put in place guidelines for its decision makers in relation to applications for a waiver of contributions. The guidelines provide for a sympathetic approach to be taken to applications for a waiver in cases where the application is in connection with a domestic violence matter and the person's sole source of income is social welfare. In such circumstances a decision maker may decide to waive the aid contribution so that the person will only pay the nominal contribution for legal advice. The Deputy will wish to note that a majority of applicants for legal aid in connection with domestic violence reliefs pay the minimum contribution and that contributions are subject to a maximum cap.

### **Charities Regulation**

120. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the details of the structural review being undertaken by the Charities Regulator to determine the human and financial resources needed to optimally implement the Charities Act; when this review commenced; when it will be completed; if it will be published; the funding being made available for the regulator in 2017; the number of staff who will be employed by the Charities Regulatory Authority in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34847/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Charities Regulatory Authority ('Charities Regulator') has commissioned an external review to examine the resources and structure required to fully implement the provisions of the Charities Act 2009. Its primary goal is to assess the resources and appropriate structure to implement the Authority's statutory remit and achieve its strategic objectives. I am advised that the process began in August of this year and it is anticipated that a report will be submitted to the Board of the Authority in the near future for its consideration. Subsequently it is anticipated that the review will be submitted to my Department for consideration. It is a matter for the Board of the Authority to decide if they wish to publish the review.

The Government is fully committed to ensuring that the Charities Regulator has the necessary resources available to achieve its goals and for this year, I made provision for a budget of €2.665 million compared with €1.419 million in 2015. This significantly increased funding has facilitated the recruitment of additional staff in key areas of the Regulator, including policy development, registration and reporting. The Regulator has also been funded to procure external investigation and forensic services and new office premises. I am determined to continue to ensure that the Regulator had the necessary staff and financial resources available to achieve its goals. To this end, I made provision for a budget for 2017 of €4.379 million, a further increase of €1.7 million over 2016 and representing an increase of over 200% since 2015 which, it is

anticipated, will provide for any additional resources which may be recommended by the external review.

### **Road Traffic Offences**

121. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the wording of the summonses to allow for prosecutions to take place under section 22 of the Road Traffic Act 2002 in view of the fact that it has been almost one year since a judge (details supplied) dismissed a case taken before her on this charge; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34403/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have updated the Deputy as to the current position concerning prosecutions under section 22 of the Road Traffic Act 2002 in my response to Parliamentary Question No. 74 of 2 November 2016.

Insofar as the wording of the relevant summonses is concerned, An Garda Síochána is engaging with the prosecution authorities in relation to these issues, which I understand are complex ones, and not necessarily related solely to the wording of summonses. As the Deputy will be aware, I have asked An Garda Síochána for an urgent report in this regard.

In addition, the wording on the summonses and other related matters are being considered by the Fixed Charge Processing Group which is jointly chaired by my Department and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

### **Legislative Programme**

122. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will introduce legislation to deal with the abusive practices of online stalking and so-called revenge porn; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34832/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** On 27th September, the Law Reform Commission published its report on Harmful Communications and Digital Safety. The report recommends two new offences to deal with posting online intimate images without consent (so-called “revenge pornography”) and voyeurism. It also proposes reform of the existing offence of harassment, to ensure that it includes online activity such as posting fake social media profiles; and a new separate offence of stalking, seen as an aggravated form of harassment, as well as reform of the existing offence of sending threatening and intimidating messages. Section 10 of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 provides that any person who, without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, by any means including by use of the telephone, harasses another by persistently following, watching, pestering, besetting or communicating with him or her, is guilty of an offence. Harassment is deemed to occur where a person seriously interferes with the other’s peace and privacy or causes alarm, distress or harm to the other. Section 10(3) also provides for orders to be made by the court to prevent communication by any means with the victim or to approach within any distance specified by the court of the place of residence or employment of the victim. Such an order can be made even in circumstances where the accused person is not convicted of the offence if the court is satisfied, having regard to the evidence, that it is in the interests of justice. While aspects of what is known loosely as “revenge pornography” are addressed by the harassment offence in this Act, there has been a growing awareness and concern in relation to harmful internet content in recent years with the growth of cyber technology. The Law Reform Commission’s report also addresses a number of other regulatory issues that have implications across Government

Departments.

I welcome the fact that the report addresses the wider context within which law reform should be framed and that it has identified the need for education and empowerment, the need to strike the correct balance between the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy, and the desirability of a graduated response where the criminal law is reserved for the most significant harm. My officials are examining the report in detail, and I would intend bringing forward legislative proposals to address any potential gaps in the criminal law in this area.

### Defence Forces Deployment

123. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if plans were devised for martial law in the event that gardaí went on strike. [34864/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** While there would be no question of the Defence Forces carrying out normal policing duties, the Defence Forces are always available as an aid to the civil power and, of course, in contingency planning discussions that role was envisaged to continue should a withdrawal of labour by members of An Garda Síochána have taken place.

### Employment Data

124. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the percentage of employment gains in each region in the 12 months to quarter two of 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34330/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Regina Doherty) (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) is the official source of estimates of employment in the State. The most recent figures available are for Q2 2016. Estimates of employment are produced by NUTS2 and NUTS 3 Regions.

The following table shows the number of persons aged 15 years and over in employment classified by NUTS2 and NUTS3 region in Q2 2015 and Q2 2016 and the annual change over this period.

**Persons aged 15 years and over in employment (ILO) classified by NUTS2 and NUTS3 region, Q2 15 and Q2 16 and the annual change to Q2 16**

| NUTS2 and NUTS3 Regions     | Q2 15   | Q2 16   | Annual Change<br>'000 | Annual Change<br>% |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Border, Midland and Western | 492.3   | 498.6   | 6.2                   | 1.3                |
| Border                      | 193.1   | 196.9   | 3.9                   | 2.0                |
| Midland                     | 116.0   | 116.6   | 0.6                   | 0.6                |
| West                        | 183.3   | 185.0   | 1.7                   | 0.9                |
| Southern and Eastern        | 1,466.4 | 1,516.4 | 50.0                  | 3.4                |
| Dublin                      | 591.8   | 617.5   | 25.7                  | 4.3                |
| Mid-East                    | 232.7   | 242.2   | 9.5                   | 4.1                |
| Mid-West                    | 152.3   | 157.6   | 5.3                   | 3.5                |
| South -East                 | 206.6   | 213.8   | 7.2                   | 3.5                |



| NUTS2 and NUTS3 Regions | Q2 15   | Q2 16   | Annual Change<br>‘000 | Annual Change<br>% |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| South West              | 283.0   | 285.4   | 2.3                   | 0.8                |
| State                   | 1,958.7 | 2,014.9 | 56.2                  | 2.9                |

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), Central Statistics Office, Ireland.

Data may be subject to future revision.

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

Reference period: Q2 = April - June.

### Cross-Border Projects

125. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Taoiseach the status of the Narrow Water Bridge project linking counties Louth and Down; the funding for this project; and if there have been any design changes. [34966/16]

**The Taoiseach:** Under “A Fresh Start - Stormont House Agreement” the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government have agreed to undertake a review of the Narrow Water Bridge project with a view to identifying options for its future development, for consideration by the North-South Ministerial Council.

The Narrow Water Bridge project was discussed at the NSMC in July where it was agreed that work should continue on identifying options to progress the project and that a further update on it and the other Fresh Start Section E Commitments would be prepared for consideration at the next NSMC in Armagh on 18 November.

Discussions at official level have taken place between Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government officials.

Senior officials from the Northern Ireland Department for Infrastructure and the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport have met with key stakeholders, including the relevant local authorities, to provide an update on the NSMC discussions and to further explore how options for the project should be advanced.

### Labour Court Recommendations

126. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the cost in a full year of implementing all the recommendations of the Labour Court dated 3 November 2016 in respect of Garda pay and allowances (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34798/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, following intensive negotiations between the Government, the Garda Representative Association (GRA) and Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission, the Labour Court issued a recommendation on 3 November last in relation to the dispute. In the case of individual members, the recommendation for the GRA and AGSI would provide extra remuneration of around €4,000 on average to a member of the Service over the next 12 months through:

- an increase in the value of the rent allowance by €500 bringing it to €4,655 per annum with effect from 1 January 2017;
- the integration of the rent allowance in the new amount of €4,655 into salary with consequential increases in unsocial hours and overtime payments also with effect from 1 January 2017;
- the introduction of a €15 premium payment per annual leave day to compensate for the uncertainty attaching to the taking of leave by Gardaí. This payment will be worth €510 per annum to a Garda with 34 days annual leave;
- the implementation of a long-standing recommendation of the Garda Inspectorate through the introduction of paid 15 minute pre-tour briefing or tasking sessions with effect from 1 January 2017.

Under the Labour Court recommendation, new recruits who do not currently receive rent allowance, will have it restored, in addition to the other improvements I just listed. In addition, the increment freeze in place for GRA members since 1 July will be lifted and any arrears arising from increments foregone will be paid.

The Government has also made it clear that it is committed to introducing legislative change to give the Garda Associations the right of access to the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court.

On foot of the Labour Court recommendation, the GRA and AGSI agreed to defer the intended industrial action over the course of the four Fridays in November to facilitate a ballot of their membership. This was a very welcome decision by the Garda associations and has ensured that a full policing service remains in place.

The Government fully respects the decision of the Labour Court as the independent industrial relations body of last resort in the State and agreed last week to accept its recommendation. The outcome of the process is now being examined in detail by all sides and it is hoped that it will form the basis for a final resolution of this dispute following the balloting of members of AGSI and the GRA in due course.

The independent recommendation of the Labour Court seeks to address the concerns that have been articulated by the representative bodies in relation to their pay and conditions including of new recruits, and their access to the statutory dispute resolution bodies. The nature of the Labour Court's recommendation is such that some of the cost of the implementation of the proposals, if they are accepted by the members of AGSI and the GRA, depend on the amount of overtime worked in any year. That said, I am advised that, depending on a number of variables, the estimated gross annual cost of implementing the Labour Court Recommendation could exceed €50m; however, this gross cost will be offset by statutory deductions for tax, PRSI, etc., which will reduce the net Exchequer cost.

Once the outcome of the ballots is known and if the proposals are accepted, the additional budgetary cost will be the subject of discussions between my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

What is most important at this juncture is that members of AGSI and the GRA are afforded the time and space to give the Labour Court's recommendation the detailed consideration that it deserves.

127. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if proposed changes to the Lottery Act 1956 would drive spending away from local voluntary groups; the way changes may affect key lottery income to local community organisations (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35144/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton) (Deputy David Stanton):** The Deputy will be aware that the General Scheme of the Gambling Control Bill was published in July 2013 following approval by the Government and is currently being drafted by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel. The proposed legislation is intended, upon its enactment, to repeal all extant gambling legislation, including the Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956. The National Lottery will continue to be legislated for separately.

The General Scheme was published in 2013 and proposes, *inter alia*, for the licensing of lotteries by the regulatory body to be established under the legislation. Departmental officials are currently reviewing the draft Scheme, taking account of intervening developments and technologies in the gaming sector.

### Policing Plans

128. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the practical interactions between the Garda Inspectorate, the Policing Authority, Garda management and her office in relation to producing a Garda service level agreement, an updated Garda customer service charter and the policing plan; if she has approved the policing plan for 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34843/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Garda Commissioner sets out the proposed arrangements for policing services each year through the Annual Policing Plan. Section 22 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended, provides that when developing the annual plan the Garda Commissioner must have regard to the policing priorities determined for the year in question. The priorities are those set by the Policing Authority in relation to policing matters and those set by me in relation to matters concerning state security. The Garda Inspectorate has no function in relation to the determination of policing priorities or the policing plan.

Section 22 of the Act, as amended, provides that the Garda Commissioner must submit the draft policing plan for the following year to the Policing Authority for approval by November each year. It is my understanding that the Authority anticipates that the Commissioner will submit the draft annual Policing Plan for 2017, complete with performance targets, by the end of this week. It will then be forwarded to me for my consent. Once agreed, the Policing Plan will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

In relation to the Garda customer charter, I wish to inform the Deputy that neither the Policing Authority nor the Garda Inspectorate has a role in drafting or approving the charter.

### National Women's Strategy

129. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the commitment in the programme for Government regarding the national women's strategy that is due to be published by the end of 2016. [35168/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):**

Substantial work has been done on the preparation of a new National Women's Strategy. A written consultation will begin shortly when a consultation document will be published on my Department's website. Public consultation meetings will be held in a number of locations in December and January before the Strategy is finalised.

### Visa Agreements

130. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if there is a mechanism which would allow a non-national spouse of an Irish citizen resident here to continue working freely within the EU without the need to constantly apply for visas for various Schengen countries; if she can use her discretionary powers, as provided for in legislation, to grant an Irish passport based on the exceptional circumstances in a case (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34415/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that in relation to the situation outlined by the Deputy, immigration controls, including visa requirements, for other jurisdictions is not a matter over which my Department has any input or control.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the starting point for any immigration scheme based in domestic law is for the applicant to be residing in the State. Until such time as the people concerned are actually residing in the State it is not possible to advise them on the best course of action open to them.

In relation to applications for citizenship, the granting of an application for a certificate of naturalisation is governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. Section 15 of the Act provides that the Minister may, in her absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation provided certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are that the applicant must :

- be of full age,
- be of good character,
- have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the State immediately before the date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a further total residence in the State amounting to four years,
- intend in good faith to continue to reside in the State after naturalisation,- have, before a judge of the District Court in open court, in a citizenship ceremony or in such manner as the Minister, for special reasons, allows—(i) made a declaration, in the prescribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, and(ii) undertaken to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.

Section 15A provides that, notwithstanding the above, where the application is in relation to naturalisation of the spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen the requirements are, inter alia, that the couple are married or civil partners to each other for a period of at least 3 years and are living together and, immediately before the date of application, have a period of one year's continuous residence in the island of Ireland and, during the preceding four years, have a further period amounting to 2 years (i.e. 3 years in total). Section 15A(2) provides that the Minister may, in her absolute discretion waive some of the conditions in relation to an application from a spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen if she is satisfied that the applicant would suffer serious consequences in respect of his or her bodily integrity or liberty if not granted Irish

citizenship. There is no right or entitlement to have any of the conditions waived, it is entirely at the Minister's discretion.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 as amended. Detailed information on Irish citizenship and naturalisation is available on the INIS website at [ww.inis.gov.ie](http://ww.inis.gov.ie). The website also contains an on-line naturalisation residency calculator which individuals may find of assistance in establishing if the residency requirements are met.

Responsibility for the issue of an Irish passport to Irish citizens is a matter for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

### **Judicial Appointments**

131. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 116 of 4 October 2016, her plans to introduce regulations to address the conflicts that can arise through the assignment of judges to districts where they may have worked for many years as a solicitor, in view of the fact that such conflicts will not be prevented by the establishment of a judicial council. [34423/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, the drafting of the Judicial Council Bill which will establish a Judicial Council in order to provide an effective mechanism for dealing with complaints against judges is currently at an advanced stage. There is one aspect of the work of the Judicial Conduct Committee which will be established by virtue of the Judicial Council Bill which may be relevant to the Deputy's concerns. One of the tasks of that Committee will be to draw up guidelines on judicial conduct and ethics which, in turn, will be adopted by the Judicial Council. The norm for such codes is that they would include matters such as guidance in respect of conflicts of interest and other integrity-related matters.

As the Deputy will also be aware, the scheduling of court cases and the allocation of court business is a matter for the respective Presidents of the Courts and the presiding judge who are, under the Constitution, independent in the exercise of their judicial functions. The decision reached in any court case is a matter entirely for the presiding judge. If a person believes that their interests would be affected if a particular judge were to hear and determine the matter in question, then an application to recuse a judge must be made to the judge concerned by, or on behalf of, that person. The decision on recusal is a matter for the judge concerned and, if the applicant is not satisfied with the decision the judge makes, it is possible to appeal any decision of that judge to the appropriate appeal court.

### **Judicial Pay**

132. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 118 of 4 October 2016, the details of which travel and subsistence expenses are subject to regulation and thus must be vouched, and which travel and subsistence expenses may be claimed without being vouched. [34424/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its func-



tions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that all judicial travel and subsistence expenses are subject to regulation. Travel and Subsistence expenses are paid in accordance with rates sanctioned by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and are paid in compliance with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regulations.

These regulations set out fixed rates payable to judges for mileage and subsistence where judges are required to travel in the performance of their official duties. Expenses claimed which are not covered by these fixed rates should be vouched, for example, expenses incurred in the use of public transport and car parking. All judicial travel and subsistence claims are checked and validated by the Courts Service prior to payment authorisation. This process ensures that claims comply with all relevant regulations and that the amounts claimed are correct.

### **Judicial Pay**

133. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 118 of 4 October 2016, the frequency with which audits are conducted; the persons by whom they are conducted; and the number of audits per year that take place. [34425/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that all travel and subsistence expenditure, including judicial travel and subsistence, incurred by the Courts Service is subject to audit by the Courts Service Internal Audit Unit. Since 2006, the Internal Audit Unit has carried out 4 audits of travel and subsistence, including judicial travel and subsistence. In addition, all travel and subsistence expenditure is open to review by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General as part of his annual audit of the Courts Service Appropriation Account.

All judicial travel and subsistence claims are checked by the Courts Service prior to payment authorisation to ensure that they comply with all relevant regulations and that the amounts claimed are correct and appropriate for payment.

### **Visa Applications**

134. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for a spousal visa in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34426/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the visa application referred to was received by the Irish Visa Office in New Delhi on the 26th of February, 2016.

In accordance with the Policy Document on Non-EEA Family Reunification, published by this Department in December 2013, the Visa Office has a business target of 6 months for ap-



plications of this type. It should be noted that this is purely a business target and is in no way a legal obligation on the Visa Office. In the case of the application referred to by the Deputy, whilst a preliminary assessment of the application has been completed, the application referred to requires a more comprehensive examination. This has led to some delays in processing. The Visa Office in New Delhi can commit to issuing a decision within the next 4 weeks.

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

In addition, applicants may themselves e-mail queries directly to INIS (visamail@justice.ie). For queries relating to the New Delhi visa office, the applicant can also email that office directly (newdelhivisaoffice@dfa.ie).

### Judicial Appointments

135. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of vacancies that exist at present on the District Court, the Circuit Court, the High Court, the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court and any courts established under the Treaty of the European Union to which Ireland is required to nominate candidates for appointment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34457/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I wish to advise the Deputy that there are currently 5 judicial vacancies in the Courts, as follows:

| Court           | Number of vacancies |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Supreme Court   | 1                   |
| Court of Appeal | 0                   |
| High Court      | 0                   |
| Circuit Court   | 3                   |
| District Court  | 1                   |

In respect of existing and future vacancies in the Courts, the requirements of the administration of justice will be the overriding priority for the Government over the period ahead as the necessary reforms in regard to the judicial appointments process are brought forward as expeditiously as is practicable.

In relation to Courts established under the Treaty of the European Union, in accordance with Regulation 2015/2422 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2015, Ireland is to nominate a second judge to General Court of the European Union. An independent group was established to assist in identifying candidates with the relevant qualifications; to assess their suitability and to recommend suitable candidates for nomination by the Government in accordance with Article 254 of the Treaty on the Functioning of EU. The closing date for receipt of completed applications, which were sought by public advertisement, was Monday 14 November. The work of the independent group is still ongoing. There is currently no other vacancy for an Irish Judge in the EU Courts of Justice.

## Insurance Costs

136. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans in relation to the review and reforming of regulations and laws surrounding fraudulent personal injury claims in the workplace, to help protect small and medium size businesses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34459/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 contains provisions aimed at tackling fraudulent personal injury claims.

Section 25 of the Act provides that it is an offence for a person to give or adduce evidence in a personal injuries action that is false or misleading and that the person knows to be false or misleading, or to cause false or misleading evidence to be given or adduced with the intention of misleading the court. It is also an offence for a person to give false or misleading instructions or information to a solicitor or expert in relation to a personal injuries action or to cause false or misleading instructions or information to be given with the intention of misleading the court.

Under section 29 of the Act, a person guilty of an offence under section 25 is liable, on conviction on indictment, to a fine not exceeding €100,000, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years or both. A person convicted summarily of an offence under section 25 is liable to a Class B fine (a fine not exceeding €4,000) or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or both.

Section 26 of the Act requires a court to dismiss a personal injuries claim where the plaintiff gives evidence that is false or misleading and that he or she knows to be false or misleading, or causes false or misleading evidence to be given with the intention of misleading the court, unless dismissal of the action would result in injustice being done.

These provisions of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 are currently being considered by the Cost of Insurance Working Group, chaired by Minister of State Eoghan Murphy TD.

## Probation and Welfare Service

137. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the average waiting times for each probate office to provide a grant of probate and a grant of letters of administration; her views on whether probate offices are providing a timely service in all areas; her further views on whether they have adequate resources and staff to provide a timely and efficient service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34463/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Probate Office is an office of the High Court and management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions under the Courts Service Act 1998. Probate functions are also carried out by County Registrars at District Probate Registries in a number of provincial court offices.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that the current waiting time for Grants of Representation in Dublin is 20 weeks for applications lodged by a solicitor and 25 weeks for personal applications. Waiting Times in District Probate Registries are set out in the table:

| District Probate Office | Applications from solicitors | Applications from personal applicants    |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Cavan                   | 16-18 weeks                  | 16-18 weeks                              |
| Dundalk                 | 6 weeks                      | 6 weeks                                  |
| Mullingar               | 16 weeks                     | 12-13 weeks                              |
| Clonmel                 | 2 weeks                      | this service is not available at present |
| Kilkenny                | 3-4 months                   | 3-4 months                               |
| Waterford               | 7 weeks                      | 1 month                                  |
| Wexford                 | 2-3 weeks                    | 3-4 weeks                                |
| Cork                    | 12 weeks                     | 12 weeks                                 |
| Tralee                  | 5 weeks                      | 5 weeks                                  |
| Limerick                | 4-6 weeks                    | 3-4 weeks                                |
| Letterkenny             | 12-16 weeks                  | 12-16 weeks                              |
| Sligo                   | 12-16 weeks                  | 14-18 weeks                              |
| Castlebar               | 2-4 weeks                    | 2-4 weeks                                |
| Galway                  | 12-14 weeks                  | 14-16 weeks                              |

All applications for Grants of Representation in deceased persons' estates are made on foot of a number of mandatory legal documents which must be furnished by the applicants and these require detailed checking by the Probate Office to ensure that the estate of the deceased person is administered correctly and in accordance with the law. All applications are assessed on the basis of the date on which they are lodged, an approach which provides fairness and equity to all applicants.

The backlogs in the probate system are a cause for concern and a review of the probate system is being carried out at present. It is anticipated that a report with recommendations for the modernisation of the process will be presented before the end of 2016 to the Senior Management Team of the Courts Service and to the Courts Service Board for their consideration.

In the meantime, the Courts Service has assigned an additional permanent member of staff to the Probate Office to assist in dealing with the high volume of work of the Office and a further member of staff will be assigned shortly.

### Asylum Applications

138. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the reason Ireland frequently insists that families seeking reunification under the Dublin III regulation undergo DNA testing to prove the familial relationship in cases where substantial documentary evidence of the familial relationship exists and has been provided (details supplied). [34512/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am advised by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC), the independent agency responsible for assessing take charge applications from other Member States, that where a request to take charge of an asylum application for family reasons is received, proof of that familial relationship is required. Often supporting documentary proof is not available, is incomplete or is not capable of being authenticated with a reasonable degree of certainty. In the limited number of such cases, the results of biometric tests can provide a greater degree of certainty of a family link. This is particularly important in the case of a transfer involving a minor or other vulnerable person so as to ensure that they are being placed in the right family unit in

the interests of their welfare and safety, as required by law.

I would point out that the primary purpose of the EU Dublin Regulation is the determination of the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection (usually the country where the asylum application is first made) and not family reunification which the Department operates under separate legal provisions.

### **Garda Inspectorate Reports**

139. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the detail of the commitment in the programme for Government concerning extending Garda oversight and accountability following the Garda Inspectorate report on the restructuring of An Garda Síochána. [30750/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Garda Inspectorate report ‘Changing Policing in Ireland’ which was published last December is a comprehensive report into all aspects of the administration of An Garda Síochána. In July the Government approved my proposals for a Five Year Reform and High Level Workforce Plan for An Garda Síochána which combines the Government’s response to the report of the Garda Inspectorate and the commitments in the Programme for a Partnership Government to increase the visibility, effectiveness and responsiveness of An Garda Síochána. In this regard it sets out an overall vision of a Garda workforce of 21,000 comprising 15,000 Gardaí, 2,000 Reserves and 4,000 civilians to be achieved incrementally over five years in tandem with the delivery of reforms. The delivery of this overall vision is supported by provision in the 2017 Estimates for the recruitment of 800 trainee Gardaí, up to 500 additional civilian staff and 300 Reserves.

The reform plan has three interlocking elements that must work together if it is to succeed-

- the reform measures themselves which are designed to deliver 21st century policing in a world class policing service;
- the resources in terms of increased numbers of Gardaí, Reserves and Civilians backed up by the substantial capital investment of €311m already earmarked for ICT, the fleet and Garda stations under the Capital Plan 2016-2021; and
- the enhanced implementation structures to ensure delivery leveraging the resources and statutory remit of the Policing Authority.

The vehicle for the reform agenda will be the Garda Commissioner’s Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 published in June which captures the bulk of the recommendations of the Inspectorate Report.

In the case of civilians the plan sets a target of 20% to bring An Garda Síochána more into line with international norms. This in effect means an increase in the number of civilians to 4,000. This will be achieved through (i) a ‘civilian by default’ policy to be adopted in relation to the filling of all new posts other than operational policing posts and for non-operational policing posts that become vacant and (ii) redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties that may be done by suitably qualified civilians where necessary. It is worth noting that the Inspectorate Report suggests that there are up to 1,250 Gardaí in such posts including in the Garda Technical Bureau, ICT, Human Resources etc. The Garda Commissioner, in conjunction with the Policing Authority will prepare a plan by the end of this year to realise this target by 2021.

As I have said, the bulk of the Inspectorate's recommendations have been accepted. However, it is not intended to implement at this time the recommendations of the Inspectorate aimed at reducing the number of regions and Divisions having regard to the major reform programme underway in An Garda Síochána, and the importance of ensuring visible leadership and maintaining and enhancing the close links between An Garda Síochána and local communities. These recommendations will be kept under review.

The Policing Authority is an independent statutory body established on 1 January 2016. Its role is to oversee the performance of the Garda Síochána in relation to policing services, to promote public awareness of policing matters and to promote and support the continuous improvements in policing in Ireland. Its mission is to drive excellent policing through valued and effective oversight and governance.

Since its establishment, the Policing Authority has been focusing, as a matter of priority, on its functions which have statutory deadlines and reform significance. The Policing Authority has met on several occasions with the Commissioner and her senior team, as a follow up on its consideration of the O'Higgins Report and related matters. A number of these meetings have been held in public to reassure the community about the performance of the Garda Síochána. Areas that have been highlighted in the discussions include:

- Implementation of the Modernisation and Renewal Programme within An Garda Síochána;
- Review of the Garda Protected Disclosure policy;
- Plans to conduct a culture audit within An Garda Síochána;
- Corporate governance arrangements and management structures within An Garda Síochána; and
- Arrangements for training and the professional development of members

The Authority has approved a three year Strategy for An Garda Síochána. It has also determined the policing priorities for 2017 which will inform the content of the 2017 Policing Plan which will be published before the end of the year. It has reviewed and issued recommendations on the Garda Protected Disclosure policy and will also establish a Code of Ethics that includes standards of conduct and practice for Garda members.

The Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) has a hugely important role in ensuring that public confidence in the Garda Síochána is safeguarded, and has extensive powers under the 2005 Act to enable it to carry out its responsibilities. Significant changes were made to the powers of GSOC in the last two years including making GSOC a designated body for receiving protected disclosures.

I am committed to ensuring that we have in place the most effective possible mechanism for the investigation of complaints and I met with the Chairperson of GSOC last month in the context of considering what further changes are desirable. It was agreed that a working group would be established to consider possible legislative changes.

### **Courts Service Administration**

140. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the commitment in the programme for Government for proposing legislation



to reduce excessive delays to trials and court proceedings. [33801/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** A Criminal Procedure Bill is currently being drafted by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel. The primary aim of the Bill is to reduce delays and increase efficiency and fairness in the criminal trial process. The Bill will in particular provide for new Preliminary Trial Hearings to allow for procedural arguments which arise during trials at present to be dealt with before a jury is empanelled, thereby saving time and allowing juries to focus on the facts of the case.

My officials are working closely with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to progress the Bill.

### **Garda Remuneration**

141. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to address the pay disparities within An Garda Síochána, in particular for new recruits; the restoration of pay cuts implemented since 2006-08 which gardaí can expect to receive; the measures she is taking to avoid industrial unrest in the ranks of An Garda Síochána; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30779/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, following intensive negotiations between the Government, the Garda Representative Association (GRA) and Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission, the Labour Court issued a recommendation on 3 November last in relation to the dispute. In the case of individual members, the recommendation for the GRA and AGSI would provide extra remuneration of around €4,000 on average to a member of the Service over the next 12 months through:

- an increase in the value of the rent allowance by €500 bringing it to €4,655 per annum with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the integration of the rent allowance in the new amount of €4,655 into salary with consequential increases in unsocial hours and overtime payments also with effect from 1 January 2017;

- the introduction of a €15 premium payment per annual leave day to compensate for the uncertainty attaching to the taking of leave by Gardaí. This payment will be worth €510 per annum to a Garda with 34 days annual leave;

- the implementation of a long-standing recommendation of the Garda Inspectorate through the introduction of paid 15 minute pre-tour briefing or tasking sessions with effect from 1 January 2017.

Under the Labour Court recommendation, new recruits who do not currently receive rent allowance, will have it restored, in addition to the other improvements I just listed. In addition, the increment freeze in place for GRA members since 1 July will be lifted and any arrears arising from increments foregone will be paid.

On foot of the Labour Court recommendation, the GRA and AGSI agreed to defer the intended industrial action over the course of the four Fridays in November to facilitate a ballot of their membership. This was a very welcome decision by the Garda Associations and has ensured that a full policing service remains in place.



The Government fully respects the decision of the Labour Court as the independent industrial relations body of last resort in the State and agreed last week to accept its recommendation. The outcome of the process is now being examined in detail by all sides and it is hoped that it will form the basis for a final resolution of this dispute following the balloting of members of AGSI and the GRA in due course.

The independent recommendation of the Labour Court seeks to address the concerns that have been articulated by the representative bodies in relation to their pay and conditions including of new recruits, and their access to the statutory dispute resolution bodies.

It is most important at this juncture that members of AGSI and the GRA are afforded the time and space to give the Labour Court's recommendation the detailed consideration that it deserves.

The Government is committed to the gradual restoration of remuneration for all public servants, including members of An Garda Síochána. The Lansdowne Road Agreement started this process, and by September next year, public servants will have received €1,900 in restoration. The first report of the Public Service Pay Commission established by the Government and chaired by Mr Kevin Foley, former Chair of the Labour Court, is to address the issue of the unwinding of the Financial Emergency in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Acts and to help provide the Government with a roadmap for exiting this legislation and addressing further pay restoration.

### **Deportation Orders Re-examination**

142. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in determination of eligibility pursuant to section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34586/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person referred to is the subject of a Deportation Order made on 17th May 2012 and therefore has no entitlement to residency in the State.

Representations were received from the person concerned pursuant to Section 3 (11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), to revoke the Deportation Order. The Deputy might wish to note that any such decision will be to 'affirm' or to 'revoke' the existing Deportation Order. In the meantime, the Deportation Order remains valid and in place.

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

### **Garda Station Opening Hours**

143. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the criteria required for the provision of a Garda station open for 24 hours per day; the policies that are in place on the opening hours for Garda stations; and if she will make a statement on

the matter. [34611/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for the allocation of Garda resources in the State and, as Minister, I have no direct role in the matter.

I have, however, been informed by the Garda authorities that Garda personnel assigned throughout the country, together with overall policing arrangements and operational strategy, are continually monitored and reviewed and are determined by a number of factors including population, crime trends and other operational strategies as dictated by the policing needs of each individual Division. Such monitoring ensures that optimum use is made of Garda resources and that the best possible Garda service is provided to communities.

The Garda authorities are satisfied that the existing station network continues to provide the necessary levels of policing services through a centralisation of services which in turn has facilitated the introduction of enhanced patrolling systems that are operational and intelligence led. This helps to ensure that a high visibility and community-oriented policing service continues to be delivered throughout Divisions nationwide and yields a number of benefits, including:

- increased Garda visibility and patrol hours;
- increased mobility and flexibility within an area resulting in an improved policing service to the public;
- enhanced co-ordination of Garda activity resulting in a greater visibility and presence in the communities;
- more effective use of finite resources across a wider area; and
- continued Garda presence in communities.

The Deputy will also be aware of the Government's commitments under the Programme for a Partnership Government. The Programme recognises that community policing is the embodiment of An Garda Síochána, providing a means of recognising that every community, both urban and rural, has its own concerns and expectations. It commits the Government to ensuring visible, effective and responsive policing in every community, including the most minimal response times possible.

In line with the Programme's commitments, I have requested the Policing Authority to oversee a review into, amongst other things, the dispersal of Garda stations in rural areas. In this regard, I understand that the Authority has formally requested the Garda Síochána Inspectorate to examine the dispersal and use of resources available to the Garda Síochána in the delivery of policing services to local communities and to make recommendations to provide a more effective, visible and responsive policing service. I have also requested the Garda Commissioner, while fully cognisant of her statutory functions in relation to the distribution of Garda resources in the State, to identify 6 stations for reopening on a pilot basis and the outcome of this pilot scheme will feed into the wider review being overseen by the Authority.

I would also draw the Deputy's attention to the significant investment of some €46 million in the Garda Fleet under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021 which provides An Garda Síochána with additional high-powered vehicles, marked and unmarked patrol cars, and motorcycles to ensure that Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime. Indeed, since the beginning of the year, some 520 new vehicles have come on stream for use by An Garda Síochána.

### **Garda Remuneration**

144. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of full-time gardaí earning under €40,000 per annum; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34640/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have requested the information sought from the Garda Commissioner regarding the number of full time Gardaí earning under €40,000 per annum and when it is to hand I will provide it to the Deputy.

### **Private Security Industry Regulation**

145. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the date the private security appeals board will be established; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34665/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I wish to inform the Deputy that the necessary arrangements are currently in train to appoint a new Board. To this end candidates have been sought for the position of a Chairperson and ordinary members of the Board, in accordance with the process outlined in the approved *Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards*, published in November 2014. Expressions of interest have been invited from suitably qualified candidates for appointment to the Private Security Appeals Board via the stateboards.ie webpage. Following the completion of the applications process, the process for the selection of candidates is now being finalised and I intend to bring nominations for appointment to the Board to the Government for approval in the near future. As the Deputy will appreciate, all appointments to the Private Security Appeals Board are made by the Government in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 2 to the Private Security Services Act 2004.

### **Deportation Orders**

146. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if her attention has been drawn to the decision to deport a person (details supplied); the reason the decision to deport was made considering that the person's spouse and children are resident here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34672/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order, made on 23 September 2016 following a comprehensive and thorough examination of his case under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). This Order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State.

However, if new information or circumstances have come to light, which has a direct bearing on his case, and which have arisen since the original Deportation Order was made, there remains the option of a request that I use my discretion, pursuant to Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) to revoke the Deportation Order. However I wish to make clear that such a request would require substantial grounds to be successful. In the meantime, the Deportation Order remains valid and in place. The enforcement of the Deportation Order

remains a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

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

### **Brexit Issues**

147. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if her Department has considered changing visa requirements for entry into Ireland to make relocation here easier for companies wishing to relocate here following Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31707/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is actively participating in the work taking place across Government to prepare for Brexit. In advance of the negotiation process that will take place following the UK's formal notification that it intends to leave the EU, and as the matters in question are complex, broad, and subject to ongoing analysis, it would be premature to speculate on the specific issue referred to by the Deputy. Irish immigration arrangements already provide for effective means whereby labour market needs can be met through the employment of non-EEA nationals where this is necessary, and to support both existing and prospective companies in this regard.

### **Naturalisation Eligibility**

148. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if the general requirement of not having received State support in the three years prior to a naturalisation application does not apply to social insurance benefits, such as jobseeker's benefit, claimed as a right on the basis of PRSI contributions or their British or EU equivalents; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34845/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** A pragmatic approach has been taken in recent years taking into account unemployment levels etc. to the general policy requiring an applicant for naturalisation to show that they have supported themselves (and his or her family if appropriate) while residing in the State. Accordingly, social welfare checks are only carried out in cases where specific queries may arise.

### **Residential Institutions Redress Scheme Eligibility**

149. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the request for An Grianán to be included in the redress board; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34901/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** An Grianán Training Centre is among the 130 institutions listed in the Schedule to the Residential Institutions Redress Act, 2002 and was therefore covered by the Residential Institutions Redress Board Scheme operated by the Department of Education and Skills. It is assumed that

the Deputy is enquiring as to whether An Grianán is also covered by the Magdalen Laundries Restorative Justice Ex Gratia Scheme under the remit of my Department.

The Magdalen Scheme is limited to 12 named institutions - the 10 Magdalen laundries that were the subject of the McAleese Report as well as the Domestic Training Schools at Stanhope Street and Summerhill. An Grianán is not one of those 12 named institutions. Although An Grianán was located on the same complex as the Magdalen Laundry in High Park, it was a separate institution in its own right. Its function was to rehabilitate teenage girls and provide education to prepare them for reintegration into society. It thus served a different purpose to that of the traditional Magdalen institutions which dated back to the 19th century and which were open to women of all ages. An Grianán Training Centre, officially established in 1971, had a separate legal status as a certified place of detention and an approved residential children's home.

Aside from An Grianán's own separate legal status and its different function to that of a Magdalen laundry, it should be further noted that the terms of the Magdalen Laundries Restorative Justice Ex Gratia Scheme specifically exclude institutions that are covered by the Residential Institutions Redress Board Scheme. This is to prevent a situation arising where an individual could receive compensation under two separate schemes for the same period of time spent in one institution.

### **Prisoner Data**

150. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in the Dublin metropolitan west area who were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment; the number who were processed at the prison where they were sent and released on the same day or the following day, by prison, category of crime and length of sentence given, in 2014, 2015 and to date in 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34980/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am informed by the Irish Prison Service that the statistics being sought are not readily available. The information is currently being collated and I will respond to the Deputy as soon as the information is to hand.

### **Drugs Crime**

151. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in the Dublin metropolitan west area who were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for drug related crime; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34981/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy may be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has advised me that statistics are not compiled in such a way as to provide the information sought by the Deputy as court statistics are compiled only for Dublin Metropolitan District as a whole.



## Crime Data

152. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of shootings and stabbings that have been recorded in the Dublin metropolitan west area over the period 2011 to 2016 to date in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34982/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, is responsible for the compilation and publication of the official recorded crime statistics, and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose. I have asked the CSO to forward the available statistics in relation to the information requested directly to the Deputy.

## Commencement of Legislation

153. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will provide a schedule and timeline for her plans to commence Part 14 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35016/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As I have outlined in my Written Reply to Questions Number 91 and 93 on 2 November 2016, it is intended that the phased commencement of the remaining sections and Parts of the Legal Services Regulation Act will be implemented over the remainder of this year and into early 2017 in relation to major undertakings such as the start-up of the Authority’s critical public complaints function. The immediate focus includes the phased commencement of Parts of the 2015 Act such as those dealing with legal costs, the new Office of the Legal Costs Adjudicator, the Roll of Practising Barristers and Pre-Action Protocols. Following this, in the new year, the key provisions centred around Part 6 of the Act dealing with the new public complaints and professional conduct and disciplinary procedures, and the appointment of the new Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal, will be commenced in tandem with the developing resource base and capability of the new body.

Now that the members and Chairperson of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority have been duly nominated, approved by motions of each House of the Oireachtas and appointed and have held their inaugural meeting on 26 October 2016, the working focus is, of necessity, on the managed roll-out of the Authority’s functions. For the sake of good order this has to be done in tandem with the phased commencement, by the Government, of the various remaining Parts and provisions of the 2015 Act. Moreover, the setting of establishment day of the Authority for 1 October 2016 has automatically triggered a number of working obligations on the new Authority several of which are statute-bound in terms of their delivery deadlines and in terms of the completion of public consultations and reports on the specified matters concerned. These are tasks for which the new Authority will need to build up its working resources in the short term and I know that the Authority is already taking action in this regard. Both my Department and the new Regulatory Authority will, therefore, continue to liaise closely by way of ensuring that we can successfully coordinate the commencement, from my side as Minister, and delivery, by the Authority as the new independent statutory regulator, of the various provisions concerned.

I would also point to the fact that Part 14 of the 2015 Act contains a series of miscellaneous provisions which deal with a range of matters and is not, therefore, a Part which deals with a single component of the new regulatory regime. These provisions, therefore, are of varied application in relation to the rest of the 2015 Act and are being dealt with accordingly in the ongo-



ing determination of their respective commencement dates. As the Deputy will be aware, the general commencement provision in Section 1 of the Act is such as to allow for the commencement of particular provisions within a Part, where necessary, without a necessity to commence the entirety of the provisions in that Part. The provisions of Part 14 deal with disparate matters such as the legal immunity of the Regulatory Authority; the right of audience of solicitors; barristers in employment providing legal services to their employer; money laundering; restriction on withdrawal from a case; the service of notices; regulation of movement between the two legal professions and the advertising of legal services. Aligning all of these issues across the 2015 Act is, therefore, a complex task for which a unilateral solution cannot be imposed. I continue to anticipate that the planning and progress of all of these matters will come to be determined in much more precise terms by my Department in conjunction with the Legal Services Regulatory Authority over the coming weeks.

### Departmental Agencies Staff Recruitment

154. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the location it is intended to employ up to 40 additional staff in an organisation (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35127/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** An increase of €2.8 million for the Data Protection Commissioner's office was announced by the Government in Budget 2017. This will bring the total funding allocation next year to over €7.5 million. I am advised by the Data Protection Commissioner, who is independent in the performance of her functions including the administration of her office, that the planning for the recruitment of additional staff is at a very early stage and while it is not possible to provide details of the total number of staff that will be recruited in 2017 or their location, allocation between Portarlington and Dublin will be made on a business needs basis.

### Gambling Sector

155. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 69 of 9 November 2016, if she will provide the names of persons and country of origin of the applications made from terrestrial bookmakers not resident in the State in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35166/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton) (Deputy David Stanton):** The names of terrestrial bookmakers not resident in the State who have applied to my Department for a Certificate of Personal Fitness are set out below. All such applications are from persons resident in the United Kingdom.

The Deputy may wish to note that, in accordance with the Betting Act 1931, the Revenue Commissioners maintain a number of regularly updated registers of persons to whom bookmakers licences are granted. This register can be accessed on their website at - <http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/excise/index.html>.

| 2015 - 2016  | 2014         | 2013         | 2012             |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| Samuel Allen | Samuel Allen | Samuel Allen | Samuel Allen     |
| Roch Bell    | Sean Barr    | Sean Barr    | Roch Bell        |
| Sean Barr    | Roch Bell    | Roch Bell    | John Boyle       |
| John Boyle   | John Boyle   | John Boyle   | Francis Campbell |

| 2015 - 2016              | 2014                     | 2013                     | 2012                     |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Laura Carr               | Conor Campbell           | Daniel Carlin            | Conor Campbell           |
| Patrick Carr             | Francis Campbell         | Francis Campbell         | Daniel Carlin            |
| Conor Campbell           | Daniel Carlin            | Conor Campbell           | Patrick Carr             |
| Daniel Carlin            | Patrick Carr             | Patrick Carr             | Paul Connolly            |
| Martin Corr              | Paul Connolly            | Paul Connolly            | Martin Corr              |
| Adrian Dunne             | Martin Corr              | Martin Corr              | Ryan Devlin              |
| Vincent Doran            | Ryan Devlin              | Ryan Devlin              | Lee Drabwell             |
| Charles Finnegan         | William Duffy            | Lee Stanley Drabwell     | Charles Finnegan         |
| Breda Graham             | Charles Finnegan         | William Duffy            | Simon Graham             |
| Brian Graham             | Brian Graham             | Charles Finnegan         | Gareth Graham            |
| Gareth Graham            | Carl Graham              | Ronan Graham             | Brenda Graham            |
| Simon Graham             | Breda Graham             | Simon Graham             | Ronan Graham             |
| Carl Graham              | Ronan Graham             | Gareth Graham            | Carl Graham              |
| Ronan Graham             | Simon Graham             | Breda Graham             | Brian Graham             |
| John Hughes              | Gareth Graham            | Brian Graham             | Hugh Hughes              |
| Stephen Hughes           | Hugh Hughes              | Carl Graham              | John Hughes              |
| Hugh Hughes              | Francis Hughes           | John Hughes              | Francis Hughes           |
| William Kelly            | John Hughes              | Hugh Hughes              | William Kelly            |
| John Keown               | William Kelly            | Stephen Hughes           | John Keown               |
| Louie Lynch              | Benjamin Keith           | Francis Hughes           | Michael Kennedy          |
| Kieran Malley            | John Keown               | Benjamin Keith           | Louie Lynch              |
| Robert Meenan            | Louie Lynch              | William Kelly            | Kieran Mallie            |
| Stephen Meenan           | Thomas McBride Senior    | Michael Kennedy          | Stephen Meenan           |
| Thomas McBride Senior    | Thomas McBride Junior    | John Keown               | Robert Meenan            |
| Thomas McBride Junior    | Oral McCartan            | Louie Lynch              | Joseph Megarrity         |
| Malachy Patrick McCartan | Fiona McCartan           | Kieran Mallie            | Thomas McBride Junior    |
| Malachy Vincent McCartan | Malachy Vincent McCartan | Robert Meenan            | Thomas McBride Senior    |
| Fiona McCartan           | Malachy Patrick McCartan | Stephen Meenan           | Ramond McBrierty         |
| Orla McCartan            | Hugh McGuinness          | Joseph Megarrity         | Malachy McCartan         |
| Edward McGarrity         | Gerard McKeivitt         | Thomas McBride Senior    | Malachy Vincent McCartan |
| Sean McGee               | Joanne McLoughlin        | Thomas McBride Junior    | Oral McCartan            |
| Mary McGee               | Daniel McNally           | Raymond McBrierty        | Hugh McGuinness          |
| Gerard McKeivitt         | Kelly McQuaid            | Fiona McCartan           | Gerard McKeivitt         |
| Robert McKeivitt         | Terrance McQuaid         | Malachy Vincent McCartan | Daniel McNally           |

| 2015 - 2016       | 2014            | 2013                      | 2012            |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Joanne McLoughlin | Kieran Mallie   | Malachy Patrick Mc-Cartan | Kelly McQuaid   |
| Terry McQuaid     | Stephen Meenan  | Hugh McGuinness           | Joseph Nicholas |
| Kelly McQuaid     | Robert Meenan   | Gerard McKeivitt          | Damien O'Hare   |
| Daniel McNally    | Joseph Nicholas | Joanne McLoughlin         | Derek Rocks     |
| Damien O'Hare     | Damien O'Hare   | Daniel McNally            | Mark Rossbrough |
| Patrick O'Hare    | Patrick O'Hare  | Terrance McQuaid          | William Savage  |
| Derek Rocks       | Mark Rossbrough | Kelly McQuaid             | John Stewart    |
| Mark Rossbrough   | Samuel Stewart  | Joseph Nicholas           | Ronald Wadey    |
| Thomas Stanley    | William Savage  | Damien O'Hare             | Colin Wadey     |
| Samuel Stewart    | Colin Wadey     | Mark Rossbrough           | Daniel White    |
| Corrie Stewart    | Ronald Wadey    | William Savage            |                 |
| Colin Wadey       | Simon White     | Ronald Wadey              |                 |
| Ronald Wadey      | Daniel White    | Colin Wadey               |                 |
| Daniel White      |                 | Daniel White              |                 |
|                   |                 | Simon White               |                 |
|                   |                 | John Whittaker            |                 |

### Mental Health Services Data

156. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons currently waiting for places at the Central Mental Hospital; the average waiting time for a person to be transferred to the Central Mental Hospital; the provision for persons whose medication cannot be administered within the prison system; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35176/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am advised that the Irish Prison Service has access to a limited number of places in the Central Mental Hospital for prisoners who require residential mental health treatment. There is currently an average of 15 to 20 prisoners each week awaiting transfer to the Central Mental Hospital. The average waiting time for a patient who is awaiting transfer varies on an ongoing basis and is determined by the number of patients who are awaiting transfer, and the number of beds available in the Central Mental Hospital at any given time.

The Irish Prison Service continues to liaise with its colleagues in the Central Mental Hospital regarding the transfer of patients to its care, and the transfer of each patient is facilitated as soon as possible in all cases. All drugs that are prescribed for the treatment of persons in custody are available to be administered to those patients in the care of the Irish Prison Service.

### Criminal Assets Bureau

157. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the degree to which adequate resources remain available to CAB; the extent to which that body can combat organised crime by way of confiscation of assets; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35198/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I can inform the Deputy that in 2016 a budget of €7.042m has been allocated to the Bureau. An ad-

ditional €0.5m in funding has been allocated for 2017.

The current staffing level at the Bureau is 71, incorporating staff on secondment from the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Social Protection, members of An Garda Síochána and staff from my own Department.

A number of vacancies at the Bureau are currently in the process of being filled including both a forensic accountant and a financial crime analyst vacancy.

The Bureau is headed by the Chief Bureau Officer who is a Chief Superintendent with An Garda Síochána and assisted by the Bureau Legal Officer. In addition, legal advice and solicitor services are provided to the Bureau by the Criminal Assets Section of the Chief State Solicitor's Office.

Asset profilers trained by the Bureau provide a criminal asset profiling service in each Garda Division in relation to persons or suspects operating within their area, with particular reference to those involved in serious criminal activity. Currently the number of trained Garda Asset Profilers is 192 plus Revenue Customs and Social Protection trained asset profilers making a total of 210 asset profilers throughout the State.

The Bureau, working closely with An Garda Síochána and other law enforcement agencies at national and international level, continues to focus its efforts on targeting assets derived from criminal conduct including those of organised criminal groups.

The Bureau is a member of the Joint Agency Task Force established further to commitments contained in the *Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and implementation Plan*.

Additional Garda resources were made available to the Bureau in support of the operation of the recently established Special Crime Task Force.

I can assure the Deputy that I am committed to making sure the necessary resources are made available to the Bureau from within the available public finances. In this regard, the resources of the Bureau are, and will continue to be, kept under ongoing review by both the Criminal Assets Bureau and my Department.

Further detailed information concerning the resources allocated to the Bureau and its activities can be found in the Annual Reports of the Bureau which are available on my Department's website.

### **Prison Accommodation**

158. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which adequate and sufficient prison spaces are available to meet requirements at the present time with particular reference to the need to segregate serious offenders from those found guilty of less serious crime; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35199/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I wish to inform the Deputy that the overall bed capacity of the Irish Prison System is 4,202. On 15th November, 2016 there were 3,686 prisoners in custody. This represents 88% occupancy.

I can inform the Deputy that all committals to the prison service are dealt with in a manner which ensures the safety of the prisoner themselves, the staff and the entire prisoner population. Each prisoner is placed in accommodation deemed appropriate to the individual based on the information made available to the prison staff on committal, which would include, health, of-

fence, criminal connections and possible conflicts with other prisoners.

There are 14 institutions in the Irish prison system consisting of 11 traditional ‘closed’ prisons, 2 open centres and 1 semi-open centre. The profile of each institution is outlined in the following table.

| Prison                    | Profile   | Security |
|---------------------------|---|----------|
| Arbour Hill               | Closed - long term sentenced prisoners  | Medium   |
| Castlerea                 | Closed - remand and sentenced prisoners - Connaught region                        | Medium   |
| Cloverhill                | Closed - primarily caters for remands prisoners                                   | Medium   |
| Cork                      | Closed - remands and sentenced prisoners  | Medium   |
| Dochas Centre             | Closed female prison  | Medium   |
| Limerick                  | Closed - remands and sentenced prisoners including females                        | Medium   |
| Loughan House             | Open Centre   | Low      |
| Midlands Prison           | Closed - special wing to include sex offenders                                    | Medium   |
| Mountjoy                  | Closed - main committal prison for Dublin area                                    | Medium   |
| Portlaoise                | Closed - committals from Special Criminal Court and includes subversive prisoners | High     |
| Shelton Abbey             | Open Centre   | Low      |
| St. Patrick’s Institution | Closed - remand prison only for young offenders.                                  | Medium   |
| Training Unit             | Semi Open - strong emphasis on Work and Training                                  | Low      |
| Wheatfield                | Closed - Place of detention - strong emphasis on Work and Training                | Medium   |

I am satisfied that there are adequate spaces in the prison estate, and these spaces are configured appropriately, to deal with all categories of prisoners.

### Garda Operations

159. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which conclusions continue to be reached in respect of the various cold cases which have been identified over several years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35200/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, the provision and allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the light of identified operational demands. In this regard I am informed that the Serious Crime Review Team (SCRT) continues to review serious cases that remain unsolved and continues to identify evidence and witnesses to assist in the development of these cases.

At the conclusion of each review by the SCRT, a substantive report is provided to the Senior Investigating Officer who considers the opportunities for further investigation. Any recommendation of organisational effect is disseminated within the Garda organisation to improve the overall investigative capability of An Garda Síochána.

The Deputy will appreciate that all Garda activities, including the investigation of unsolved cases, will benefit from the ongoing investments in policing resources and the accelerated pro-

gramme of Garda recruitment which are now underscored by commitments in the Programme for Government.

### Missing Persons Data

160. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons reported as missing in each of the past ten years to date in 2016; the number traced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35201/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I would like to thank the Deputy for raising this important matter. The Deputy's question is timely as on Wednesday, 7 December 2016, I will be hosting a ceremony to mark national Missing Persons Day. The objective of Missing Persons Day is to commemorate all those who have gone missing and recognise the lasting trauma for their families and friends. Missing Persons Day also draws attention to open or unsolved missing persons cases, and creates an opportunity to provide information on available support services. The ceremony will be attended by families and friends of missing persons, as well as a number of organisations working in the community on their behalf. An Garda Síochána will also be in attendance at the ceremony, notably the Missing Persons Bureau and many Family Liaison Officers. Further information on National Missing Persons Day is available from [missingpersonsday@justice.ie](mailto:missingpersonsday@justice.ie).

The following table details the number of missing person reports made to An Garda Síochána in the years 2007 to 10 November 2016. This table also shows the number of persons who are currently still missing for each of these years. I am advised by the Garda authorities that the information supplied is provisional, operational and liable to change.

| Year                       | No. of Missing Person Reports | Outstanding Missing Persons |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2016 (to 10 November 2016) | 8,583                         | 43                          |
| 2015                       | 9,969                         | 37                          |
| 2014                       | 9,179                         | 10                          |
| 2013                       | 7,753                         | 10                          |
| 2012                       | 8,815                         | 15                          |
| 2011                       | 8,511                         | 22                          |
| 2010                       | 8,339                         | 15                          |
| 2009                       | 7,749                         | 45                          |
| 2008                       | 7,980                         | 32                          |
| 2007                       | 7,992                         | 40                          |

### Crime Data

161. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which the various forms of crime continue to be monitored and appropriate action taken to address any trends emerging in all areas throughout the country, urban and rural; if he has any particular or specific strategies to deal with the issues; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35202/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, is responsible for the publication of recorded crime statistics.



I am advised that Garda management constantly monitor the distribution of policing resources in the light of crime trends and overall policing needs in all areas of the country, with a view to providing an effective and responsive police service.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime and the Deputy will be aware that in the most recent CSO figures, for Quarter 2 of 2016, there were decreases in many crime categories, including a 26% reduction in burglaries. This reflects the success of the concerted Garda drive against crime being implemented under Operation Thor. It is important we build on this success by ensuring that Garda numbers continue to increase. The Government has put in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging programme of reform which is being implemented in An Garda Síochána. In addition, approximately 300 appointments will be made to the Garda Reserve.

The ongoing recruitment process will support all policing operations, including special targeted strategies such as Operation Thor, which marks a significant step-up in the Garda response to burglaries and related crime. An additional €55 million has been provided in 2016 resulting in a more than doubling of the overtime allocation for 2016, bringing the total to over €90 million. For 2017, I have secured a further €71.5 million for Garda overtime which will facilitate the continuation of large scale policing operations, including those targeting gangland crime and burglary.

Furthermore, investment in a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose Garda fleet will continue under the Government's Capital Plan 2016-2021 which provides €46 million for new Garda vehicles, ensuring that Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive, on the roads and in the community. The Government is also investing in Garda airborne surveillance and enhanced technology and ICT systems. In fact, some €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, is being invested in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021 to enable An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in the fight against crime. All of these investments underline the commitment in the Programme for Government to resource and equip An Garda Síochána to provide enhanced policing and support local communities in all areas of the country.

### **Prisoner Rehabilitation Programmes**

162. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if in the context of rehabilitative training and education, provision is in place to grade applicants for such training in order to ensure the maximum benefit to the prisoner with the objective of encouragement to the pursuit of a life outside crime; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35203/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am advised by the the Irish Prison Service that it provides a wide range of rehabilitative programmes to those in custody that include education, vocational training, healthcare, psychiatric, psychological, counselling, welfare and spiritual services. These programmes offer purposeful activity to those in custody while serving their sentences and encouraging them to lead law abiding lives on release. These programmes are available in all prisons and all prisoners are eligible to use the services.

On committal, all prisoners are interviewed by the Governor and are informed of the services available in the prison. Prisoners may be referred to services or they can self refer at a later date.

The development of prisoner programmes forms a central part of the Irish Prison Service Three Year Strategic Plan 2016 - 2018. There is a clear commitment to enhance sentence planning through Integrated Sentence Management and the delivery of prison based rehabilitative programmes.

The Department of Education and Skills provides an allocation of 220 whole time teacher equivalents in partnership with the Irish Prison Service through the Education and Training Boards. The focus is on providing education which is quality assured, student centred and facilitates lifelong learning through helping prisoners cope with their sentence, achieve personal development and prepare for life after release.

For persons in custody who attend at Educational Centres, an assessment of educational needs and interests is carried out by the relevant Prison Education Centre staff. A top priority for the Irish Prison Service is ensuring help for those with reading and writing problems and peer mentoring programmes are currently active in all of our prisons.

The guiding principles which underpin the prisons' work and training service are to make available work, work-training and other purposeful activities to all those in custody. Training activities are chosen to give as much variety as possible and also to give opportunities for those in prison to acquire practical skills which will help them secure employment on release.

The Irish Prison Service has also been expanding the number of accredited courses and opportunities available to prisoners in Work Training in recent years. Enhanced partnership arrangements with accrediting bodies such as City and Guilds, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, and the Guild of Launderers and Cleaners, and the centralising of coordination and quality assurance arrangements, have enabled the Irish Prison Service to extend the number of available courses and activities with certification.

## **Garda Resources**

163. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which the facilities, technology and motorised transport available to An Garda Síochána is in keeping with best international practice in this regard; her expectation to address any such deficiencies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35204/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda resources are a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

The Government's overarching commitment is to ensure a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. In furtherance of this, I recently announced that the Government had approved my proposal for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel to be achieved by 2021, comprising 15,000 Garda members, 4,000 civilians and 2,000 Reserve members. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide-ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

The Deputy will be aware of the significant investment of some €46 million in the Garda

Fleet under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. This investment will continue to provide the Gardaí with additional high-powered vehicles, marked and unmarked patrol cars, and motorcycles to ensure that Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime. The Plan also provides an additional €205 million for investment in Garda ICT infrastructure.

Under the Garda Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016 - 2021, that I announced in October 2015 with my colleague the Minister of State at the Office of Public Works, a number of new Garda Stations will be built and a significant number of others will be refurbished. In addition, over €100 million has been provided for new Divisional headquarters in Kevin Street, Dublin and Wexford, as well as for a new Regional headquarters in Galway. Each of these projects are expected to be completed in 2017.

The Deputy will be aware that the Commissioner launched the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 in June which takes on board the key findings of various reports into An Garda Síochána by the Garda Síochána Inspectorate, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission and expert groups, amongst others. The Programme is intended to professionalise, modernise and renew An Garda Síochána to ensure that the organisation can meet present and future challenges.

### **Forensic Science Ireland Laboratory**

164. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which forensic technology available to An Garda Síochána remains comparable to that in other jurisdictions adjoining and throughout Europe; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35205/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As the Deputy will be aware, the two bodies responsible for forensics in relation to policing in Ireland are the Garda Síochána National Technical Bureau and Forensic Science Ireland (FSI) which is under my Department. Both operate to the highest standards and their staff are to be commended on their expertise and dedication to the application of science to crime investigation in Ireland over many years.

The Garda National Technical Bureau provides assistance and technical support in the investigation of crime by conducting forensic examinations of crime scenes and the forensic examination of exhibits from such crime scenes and elsewhere. The Technical Bureau is a modern forensic examination facility with state of the art examination equipment and appropriately trained and qualified expert personnel in the areas of fingerprint examination, ballistic and firearm examination, forensic photography, forensic document and handwriting examination and the mapping of crime scenes. The Bureau received ISO 17025 accreditation in February 2016.

FSI contributes to the investigation of violent and sexual crime through the application of body fluid identification techniques and DNA technology, to the investigation of fatal shootings, burglaries and hit and run traffic accidents and the detection of firearm residue. Highly trained and dedicated staff provide scientific analysis and objective expert evidence to international standards. FSI has also received ISO 17025 accreditation and is a member of the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI).

### **Garda Policing Plans**

165. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which she and her Department have examined policing practices and structures in other jurisdictions with a view to availing of the best such practices for application here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35206/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I wish to assure the Deputy, that my Department, in common with other area of the administration system, would of course have regard to international models when developing policy or legislation proposals on policing matters. However, having regard to a number of unique factors, including the fact that the Garda Síochána is a single national police force which provides a security and intelligence service as well as a policing service, international policing models may require tailoring to our circumstances.

Section 117(1) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 specifically requires the Garda Síochána Inspectorate to benchmark their recommendations by reference to the best standards of comparable police services. Arising from this requirement, every inspection conducted by the Garda Inspectorate, and any recommendation arising, has involved examining policing practices in other jurisdictions.

The Deputy will no doubt be aware that the recommendations of the Inspectorate's 2015 Report, 'Changing Policing in Ireland', formed the basis of the Government's Five Year Reform and High-level Workforce Plan for An Garda Síochána. The Commissioner's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 is the vehicle for implementing the agreed Government Plan for Garda Síochána. Key reforms being implemented include the replacement of the current District model of policing with a Divisional model where responsibilities will be allocated on a functional rather than geographical basis. However, in implementing this reform, the Garda Síochána is required to continue to maintain the close relationship it has with communities in large rural Divisions. The Plan also contains a commitment to increase the number of civilian staff in the Garda Síochána in line with international norms. A medium term target of achieving 20% civilians by 2021 is proposed to this end. I have asked the Policing Authority to monitor the implementation by the Garda Síochána of the Plan and to provide regular progress reports to the Department on the matter.

In relation to policing practices, I would point to the Garda Commissioner's responsibility under section 26 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 to direct and control the Garda Síochána. In exercising this function, I understand that the Garda Commissioner has ensured that relevant policing developments in other jurisdictions are reviewed on an on-going basis with a view to identifying and promoting the application of international best practice throughout the Garda Síochána.

### **Prisoner Rehabilitation Programmes**

166. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners in rehabilitative training at any one time in each prison; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35207/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Deputy will be aware from my replies to previous Parliamentary Questions that the Irish Prison Service provides a wide range of rehabilitative programmes that include education, vocational training, healthcare, psychiatric, psychology, counselling, welfare and spiritual services. These programmes are available in all prisons and all prisoners are eligible to use the services. On committal, all prisoners are interviewed by the Governor and are informed of the services avail-

able in the prison. At this point prisoners may be referred to services or they can self refer at a later date. Where Governors consider, on the information available, that a prisoner needs a particular intervention, they will initiate a referral.

The Irish Prison Service has also been expanding the number of accredited vocational courses and opportunities available to prisoners in Work Training in recent years. Enhanced partnership arrangements with accrediting bodies such as City and Guilds, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, and the Guild of Launderers and Cleaners and the centralising of coordination and quality assurance arrangements have enabled the Irish Prison Service to extend the number of available courses and activities with certification.

The development of prisoner programmes forms a central part of the Irish Prison Service Three Year Strategic Plan 2016 - 2018. There is a clear commitment in the Strategy to enhance sentence planning including Integrated Sentence Management and the delivery of prison based rehabilitative programmes such as education, psychology, work training and resettlement programmes.

The following table shows recent figures available (August 2016) of the average weekly participation in education and average participation in vocational training. It should be noted that a prisoner may participate in more than one activity.

| Institution              | Education - Average Weekly Prisoner Participation in June 2016 * | Vocational Training - Weekly Average Prisoner Participation in August 2016 | Average number in custody in August 2016 |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|
| Arbour Hill              | 87.6   | 77   | 135                                      |
| Castlereagh              | 140.4  | 62   | 285                                      |
| Cloverhill               | 83.8   | 29 **  | 380                                      |
| Cork                     | 125  | 59   | 270                                      |
| Dochas                   | 60.2   | 25   | 116                                      |
| Limerick                 | 107.6  | 30   | 252                                      |
| Loughan House            | 91   | 99   | 113                                      |
| Midlands                 | 305.2  | 180  | 815                                      |
| Mountjoy                 | 85.8   | 70   | 522                                      |
| Portlaoise               | 89.8   | 51   | 196                                      |
| Shelton Abbey            | 54   | 59   | 105                                      |
| St Patrick's Institution | 75.2   | 0  | 0  |
| Training Unit            | 31.2   | 59   | 85                                       |
| Wheatfield               | 110.4  | 123  | 467                                      |

\*Prison Education Centres Closed in August, therefore June 2016 figures provided.

\*\*August figures for Cloverhill not available, April figures supplied.

### Garda Oversight

167. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the action that continues to be taken to address the issue of threats and intimidation against individual members of An Garda Síochána; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35208/16]



**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Deputy will appreciate that it would not be appropriate for me to detail the operational measures that the Garda authorities may take, or would take generally, in relation to threats against members of An Garda Síochána. However, I can assure the Deputy that whatever protective and detection measures are deemed appropriate by the Garda authorities are of course taken. More generally, tackling serious and organised crime and addressing the harms it gives rise to at all levels in our community is a central policing priority, and An Garda Síochána has my full support for the strategies it has in place to give effect to this commitment.

While the criminal law in this area is kept under ongoing review, there are already a range of robust legislative provisions available, including specific legislation to deal with assaults on emergency workers, including Gardaí. These are the provisions of section 19 of the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994, as amended by section 185 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006.

Section 19 provides that any person who assaults or threatens to assault a “peace officer” acting in the execution of their duty is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to €5,000 or a term of imprisonment of up to 12 months or both, or on conviction on indictment, to a fine or imprisonment for a term of up to 7 years or both. The maximum sentence was increased from 5 years to 7 years under the 2006 Act.

A “peace officer” refers to a member of the Garda Síochána, a prison officer, a member of the fire brigade, ambulance personnel or a member of the Defence Forces. In addition, in the case of assault causing serious harm, an offender can be prosecuted under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 and could be subject to a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Therefore, the law already recognises the gravity of any attack on Gardaí and other members of the emergency services carrying out their duties and the penalties in place reflect the seriousness with which such acts are viewed.

### **Garda Strength**

168. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which she expects membership of An Garda Síochána to increase over the next twelve months, while taking into consideration natural retirements or resignations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35209/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 4,000 civilians and 2,000 Reserve. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014.

Of these 1,200 new recruits, 534 have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November. Next year the Commissioner has planned four intakes to the Garda



College of 200 new recruits scheduled for February, May, August and November giving a total intake of 800. It is expected that in total 900 trainee Garda will attest in 2017 which, taking account of projected retirements, will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,500 mark by year end 2017.

The target of 15,000 Garda members by 2021 is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. In this regard I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response. The existing recruitment campaign (launched last November) is ongoing and successful candidates will continue to be called from that campaign this year and into next year. It is expected that successful candidates from the new campaign will enter the Garda College from mid-2017.

### **Community Policing**

169. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which community policing remains available to the various Garda divisions throughout the country; the extent to which this continues to be a feature of policing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35210/16]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Deputy will be aware that the Government has, in its Programme for a Partnership Government, recognised community policing as the embodiment of An Garda Síochána, providing a means of recognising that every community, both urban and rural, has its own concerns and expectations. It commits the Government to ensuring visible, effective and responsive policing in every community throughout the country in order to provide reassurance to citizens and prevent crime. This commitment is underlined by very significant investments in Garda resources.

Community Policing continues to be a key aspect of the Garda approach to the prevention and detection of crime. Gardaí engage with a wide range of community based groups, as well in more formal setting such as Joint Policing Committees, to ensure that local issues can be aired and appropriate partnerships formed with communities to address matters of concern.

Gardaí also support over 3,700 Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes nationwide, and these form an important partnership with An Garda Síochána to prevent crime and protect communities, especially the elderly and more vulnerable persons. In addition, the Garda Text Alert Scheme provides an effective means for Gardaí to communicate crime prevention information to local communities. Since it was launched in September 2013, it has grown quickly with a total of 164,000 subscribers and in the order of 3 million text messages sent annually. Every Garda Division, rural and urban, now offers the text alert service and An Garda Síochána has published guidelines to assist in the establishment and operation of local groups.

I was glad to announce a new cost rebate scheme recently which will assist local text alert groups with the costs incurred from service providers. The scheme is administered by Muintir na Tire and is open to all Text Alert groups registered with An Garda Síochána. Overall, the funding available from my Department for Community Crime Prevention, such as Community Alert and Text Alert, has been doubled in 2016.

On 9 June 2016 the Garda Commissioner launched a five year programme to professionalise, modernise and renew An Garda Síochána, to ensure that it can meet present and future policing and security challenges. Important elements of the Garda plan include:

- increased Garda visibility with crime prevention being the number one priority

- victims being placed at the heart of the Garda service
- introduction of advanced IT systems to enhance the investigation of crime
- enhanced collaboration with national and international partners to tackle and disrupt terrorism and organised crime.

The Garda modernisation plan was developed with the benefit of inputs from Garda personnel and community stakeholders, as well as the experience of police forces in other jurisdictions. The measures in the plan also respond to reports and recommendations of the Garda Inspectorate and the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission.

In conclusion, all Garda activities, including community policing, will undoubtedly benefit from the resources now coming on stream through the Garda recruitment programme, and in particular the Government's commitment to increase Garda numbers to 15,000, so that An Garda Síochána has the capacity to address the needs of communities throughout the country and into the future.

### **Garda Strength**

170. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which she expects Garda numbers in the various Garda stations throughout County Kildare to be replenished in line with demographics and criminal activity; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35211/16]

**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 I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that in regard to the deployment of Garda personnel, a distribution model is used which takes into account all relevant factors including population, crime trends and the policing needs of each individual Garda Division. It is the responsibility of the Divisional Officer to allocate personnel within his/her Division.

I am further informed that the Garda strength of the Kildare Division, on the 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 307. There were also 23 Garda Reserves and 26 civilians attached to the Division. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation (NBCI), the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (formerly the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation) and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. In 2017, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve of approximately 300.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 will require some 3,200 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next four years in addition to the 1,200 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. This is an ambitious target and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign launched by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Commissioner last September, the second campaign this year, again received a strong response.

I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. Since the reopening of the Garda College, 534 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am informed that of these, 25 have been assigned to the Kildare Division. Another 150 trainee Garda will attest this Thursday, 17 November which will bring Garda numbers to around the 13,000 mark by year end.

The Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána. The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I expect that the Kildare Division, like all other Garda Divisions will benefit from these new resources becoming available.

### **Government Expenditure**

171. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the expenditure limit for 2017; the amount of expenditure forecast for 2017; the consequences for Ireland of exceeding the expenditure limit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34797/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** In Budget 2017, total general government expenditure of €76.6 billion is forecast for next year. This is c.€0.2 billion more than the level that is forecast as being compliant with the expenditure benchmark. The calculation in Table A7 of the Budget book shows net fiscal space for 2017 of €-0.2 billion, indicating an excess over forecast permitted expenditure. This level of deviation equated to about 0.07% of GDP, which is substantially below the 0.5% of GDP that is defined as a significant deviation.

This excess over permitted expenditure in 2017 is due to the projected increase in our non-discretionary EU Budget contribution arising from the large revision in our GDP. As this is a factor beyond our control, the Government has decided not to alter its fiscal plans to cope with a one-off level shift in our EU contribution.

As regards our 2017 Budget, we expect that the European Commission will find that Ireland is broadly compliant with its obligation. Indeed, following the submission of draft budgetary plans for 2017, Ireland is one of the countries that the European Commission did not write to seeking clarification or changes.

### **Mortgage Arrears Proposals**

172. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to

date on action 1.19; the progress being made with the Central Bank to ensure the code of conduct in mortgage arrears provides strong consumer protection; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35048/16]

173. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.20; the progress being made with the Central Bank to conduct an assessment of exiting sustainable restructuring solutions across all lenders and non-bank entities operating here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35049/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 172 and 173 together.

In relation to Actions 1.19 and 1.20 of the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness the Deputy will be aware that the Central Bank of Ireland's (The Central Bank) Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA) provides a strong consumer protection framework to ensure that each borrower who is struggling to keep up mortgage repayments is treated in a timely, transparent and fair manner by lenders. In this context I wrote to the Governor of the Central Bank to request that an assessment be undertaken of the range of available sustainable restructure solutions offered by banks and non-bank entities and that this assessment should consider in particular how the available options may impact on the distressed borrower's capacity to remain in their primary residence.

The Central Bank has recently submitted its report to me and my officials are currently reviewing it. The report provides valuable insights on the range of available mortgage restructure options offered by banks and non-banks.

The CCMA is a statutory code under section 117 of the Central Bank Act 1989. The CCMA recognises that it is in the interests of borrowers and lenders to address financial difficulties as speedily, effectively and sympathetically as circumstances allow. The Central Bank has the power to administer sanctions for a contravention of the CCMA under Part IIIC of the Central Bank Act 1942.

Finally, the Deputy should be aware that the numbers in mortgage arrears have been steadily declining. Data released by the Central Bank on 13 September shows that to end-Q2 2016, the number of mortgage accounts in arrears for principal dwelling houses (PDH) has declined for the last twelve quarters. Some 120,614 PDH accounts were also classified as restructured. It is clear that where a borrower actively engages with their lender under the CCMA with a view to agreeing a sustainable arrangement to address their mortgage arrears, it is more likely that an equitable arrangement will be found and that the borrower will be able to remain in their family home.

### **Living City Initiative**

174. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 5.10 to review the living city initiative with a view to further enhancing the attractiveness and effectiveness of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35109/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As the Deputy may be aware, the Living City Initiative was initially provided for in Finance Act 2013 and commenced on 5th May 2015. The Initiative was extended beyond the original planned pilot cities of Limerick and Waterford,

to include the cities of Dublin, Cork, Galway and Kilkenny. In line with my Department's commitment to evidence based policy-making, the inclusion of these additional four cities followed the completion of a comprehensive, independent ex-ante cost benefit analysis.

Following the commitment referred to by the Deputy, my officials have undertaken a further review of the Living City Initiative this year, and this was published in the Report on Tax Expenditures (October 2016) that was released on Budget Day. This document is available at [http://budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2017/Documents/Tax\\_Expenditures\\_Report%202016\\_final.pdf](http://budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2017/Documents/Tax_Expenditures_Report%202016_final.pdf).

In light of this report, and in consultation with the relevant councils and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, I announced a number of changes to the scheme in the Budget which aim to make the scheme more attractive and effective.

The principal change is to extend the residential element of the scheme to landlords, who will now be able to claim the relief by way of accelerated capital allowances for the conversion and refurbishment of property which was built prior to 1915, to be used for residential purposes. Eligible expenditure must be incurred during the relevant qualifying period which will begin on 1 January 2017 and terminate on 4 May 2020, which is the pre-existing end-date for the scheme. The allowances are at the rate of 15% per annum for 6 years with 10% in year 7.

In addition, I have decided to remove the requirement for a pre-1915 building to have been originally constructed for use as a dwelling in order to qualify for the residential element of the Initiative. The floor area restriction for owner-occupiers has also been removed and in its place, relief claimed by owner-occupiers under the Initiative will be subject to the high earners restriction. The minimum amount of capital expenditure required for eligibility for relief under all elements of the scheme is also being amended and must from 2017 exceed €5,000.

Subject to Oireachtas approval of the Finance Bill 2016, these changes will come into operation from 1 January 2017. My Department will continue to monitor the Initiative in consultation with the other stakeholders, particularly in light of these alterations.

### **Pyrite Issues**

175. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the steps he proposes to undertake to ensure that properties which are remediated under the Government's pyrite remediation scheme can get home insurance in view of statements by insurance companies that they will not provide cover; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34441/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland, can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept.

This inability to intervene in such matters is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products.

Consequently, I am not in a position to take steps to require that insurance companies provide insurance cover to properties which are remediated under the government's pyrite remediation scheme.



## Property Tax Exemptions

176. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Finance the number of properties which have been deemed non-habitable and therefore exempted from property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34468/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by Revenue that there is no liability to Local Property Tax (LPT) where a property is derelict to such an extent that it is not suitable for occupation and is not actually occupied.

In such circumstances there is no requirement on the property owner to file an LPT return. However it can happen that an LPT return issues because Revenue is not aware that the property in question is derelict. Where this occurs, the property owner should make contact with Revenue confirming the status of the property so the LPT Register can be updated.

There are currently in excess of 3,800 properties listed as derelict on the LPT Register.

## Tax Code

177. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a person (details supplied) is now paying almost double the amount of tax that they were paying before their spouse's death; his views on whether the living alone allowance does not adequately compensate for the loss of a second income; if the tax credits for widows and widowers will be reviewed to ensure that they are not charged more tax on income following the death of a partner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34525/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by Revenue that without knowing the full circumstances of the particular taxpayer it is not possible to comment specifically on the case raised by the Deputy. However I can provide the following general information with regard to the taxation of widowed persons in the year of bereavement, and in subsequent years.

In regard to the tax year in which a spouse has died, the allocation of standard rate bands and personal credits varies depending on how the couple were assessed to tax.

In the case of a couple assessed on the basis of joint assessment where the deceased individual was not the "assessable spouse" (i.e. the spouse responsible for making a joint return on behalf of the couple), the assessable spouse will continue to be entitled to married persons' tax credits and rate bands until the end of that year.

Where the deceased individual was the "assessable spouse", the surviving spouse is taxed on a joint assessed basis for the period to the date of death, and for the balance of the tax year the surviving spouse is taxed as a single person but with an increased personal tax credit of €3,300 (equivalent to the married tax credit) in respect of that period.

Where the spouses were assessed on the basis of separate treatment (i.e., taxed as single individuals) the surviving spouse is entitled to the increased personal tax credit of €3,300 in respect the year of death.

In subsequent years, a person whose spouse has died will be entitled to the widowed person's tax credit of €2,190 if there are no dependent children. If there are dependent children the surviving spouse will be entitled to the single personal tax credit of €1,650 and the single person child carer tax credit of €1,650, and a widowed parent tax credit is also available for the



five years following the year of bereavement. This credit tapers out over the five years and the current rates are: €3,600 in year one (the first year following bereavement), €3,150 in year two, €2,700 in year three, €2,250 in year four, and €1,800 in year five.

It is also worth noting that, following the death of a spouse, the surviving spouse may have an entitlement to a widow or widower's pension from the Department of Social Protection. As the Department of Social Protection do not operate PAYE, an individual's tax credits may be reduced in order to collect the tax due in respect of this payment. This could lead to an increase in the individual's tax deductions from other income sources in the period after the death of his or her spouse, as a result of the additional gross income received.

If the individual in question wishes to clarify any aspect of their tax treatment he or she should submit their details to their local Revenue district who will advise them of the position.

Details of the taxation of bereaved persons can also be found in Revenue leaflet IT40 available at [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie)

### **Help-To-Buy Scheme Eligibility**

178. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Finance the criteria regarding the qualifying dates for the help-to-buy incentive; if a person who entered into a contract to buy or paid a deposit on a house before 19 July 2016 could qualify for this scheme, considering that the sale of the house would not have been completed before 19 July 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34579/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** To be eligible to apply for the Help to Buy incentive, a first-time buyer must have signed a contract to purchase a new build property on or after the 19th July 2016. In the case of a self-build home, they must have drawn down of the first tranche of the relevant mortgage on or after that date. The full conditions of the scheme and its commencement remain subject to the approval of the Finance Bill 2016 by the Oireachtas.

The date of 19 July was chosen as it was the date of the launch of Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness when the introduction of the incentive was initially announced. The backdating of this incentive was announced at that time with a view to avoiding any potential interruption in house sales, by purchasers who may otherwise have deferred purchases, pending the announcement of full details of the incentive.

It is not clear if the Deputy is seeking a further backdating of the incentive prior to this date but those who entered into contracts to purchase new homes in advance of July 19th last would have made their purchasing decisions without any expectation that they would qualify for any tax relief to be introduced at a future date. Therefore any further backdating of the relief would consist of pure deadweight. As with all time-limited reliefs, there will always be people who just miss out. I do not intend to extend the parameters of this new measure as to do so would make it less targeted and more costly.

### **Tax Code**

179. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding dwelling house relief; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34588/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I have put forward an amendment on the capital acquisitions tax relief known as the dwelling house exemption for the Committee Stage of Finance Bill 2016 which I expect will be discussed by the Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach on Tuesday 10 or Wednesday 16 of November. I consider that this particular relief has lost focus since its introduction because of changes made to how it operates over the years. The purpose of my amendment is to realign the exemption with its original policy objective i.e. to alleviate the hardship of an inheritance tax liability for a person who inherited a house in which he or she had been living with the deceased and to ensure that the person did not have to sell the house to pay the tax liability. The changes I have proposed will have two principal effects.

Firstly, the exemption will only be available for inheritances. With one exception, it will no longer be possible to receive a tax-free gift of a dwelling house. The exception will be where a person gifts a dwelling house to a dependent relative. For this purpose, a dependent relative is a direct relative of the donor, or of the donor's spouse or civil partner, who is permanently and totally incapacitated because of physical or mental infirmity from maintaining himself or herself or who is over the age of 65.

Secondly, the inherited dwelling house must have been the disponent's principal private residence at the date of death. This requirement will be relaxed in situations where the disponent lives elsewhere at the date of death-for example, in a nursing home-because he or she has had to leave the house because of ill health.

If my amendment is accepted by the Oireachtas and enacted in the Finance Bill, it will take effect from the date of enactment. There will not be any provision for transitional arrangements for those people who may have arranged their affairs with the intention of taking advantage of the exemption when the required three-year period of occupation comes to an end. As the provision was originally intended to alleviate hardship it is not my intention to make transitional arrangements to facilitate individuals who intended to make use of it to transfer assets free of capital acquisitions tax.

I am also aware that connected amendments have been proposed by other deputies which are likely to be discussed at Committee Stage.

### **State Savings Schemes Data**

180. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons that have taken out State Savings products offered by the NTMA to personal savers in the past five years; and the total amount accumulated over this period. [34633/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As the Deputy will be aware, the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), a statutory body under the aegis of the Minister for Finance, has responsibility for the management of Ireland's range of Government savings products.

I am informed by the NTMA that the overall level of investment in State Savings products, including in Post Office Savings bank deposits, has increased from just under €12.7 billion at end-2010 to just under €19.5 billion at end-2015.

During this five year period, the following increases were observed in that the number:

- holders of Prize Bonds increased by some 230,000;

- customers of the Fixed Term products (such as Savings Certificates, Savings Bonds) increased by some 81,000; and

- Post Office Savings Bank deposit customers increased by some 250,000.

These trends demonstrate the demand for State Savings products. These products offer a range of options to suit the needs of personal savers and they are at competitive interest rates and provide good value for holders and customers.

### Home Renovation Incentive Scheme Data

181. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of properties which were registered for the home renovation incentive scheme in Waterford city and county in 2015 and to date in 2016, and the total monetary value of these works. [34634/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by Revenue that data relating to the Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) are available from the statistics section of the Revenue website at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/index.html>. Specifically, the most recently available information on the scheme is in the Tax Expenditures section of the page at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/hri-stats.html> which contains a county breakdown of properties registering works and the value of these works in 2013-14, in 2015 and over the full period of the HRI scheme to date.

### Excise Duties Yield

182. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of revenue which would be generated annually with an increase of 1 cent in excise duty on fuel, alcohol and cigarettes, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34760/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by Revenue that a Post Budget 2017 Ready Reckoner is available on the Revenue Statistics webpage at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/ready-reckoner.pdf>.

In relation to the Deputy's questions, this Ready Reckoner shows a wide range of detailed information, including Excise increases on fuel, alcohol and tobacco. While the Ready Reckoner does not show all of the specific costings requested by the Deputy, others can be estimated from those shown on a pro-rata or straight line basis with those displayed in the Reckoner.

### Credit Unions

183. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the position which applies in a circumstance (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34796/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Section 21 of the Credit Union Act, 1997 provides for the nomination of property in a credit union. The legislation specifies that a credit union member aged 16 or over, can nominate in writing a person or persons to become entitled to all or part of the member's property in the credit union at the time of the member's death, up to a prescribed limit. It also provides for the member to vary or revoke their nomination.

It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the specific issue raised in the question as this would involve an interpretation of the law, which is a matter for the courts.

### **Agriculture Schemes**

184. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Finance if he is considering proposals (details supplied) by farming organisations regarding the Finance Bill 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34906/16]

188. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider delaying the date for commencement of the amendment specifically regarding the restriction of flat rate addition, section 46 of the Finance Bill, which is due to come into operation on 1 January 2017 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35136/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 184 and 188 together.

Section 46 of the Finance Bill provides for a restriction of the flat-rate scheme for farmers with effect from 1 January 2017. The amendment gives the Minister for Finance the power to make an order excluding particular agricultural goods or agricultural services from the flat-rate addition scheme. This power can be exercised where Revenue has carried out a review and the Minister for Finance is satisfied that, because of the business structures, contractual arrangements or models in place in a particular sector, the application of the flat-rate addition within that sector has resulted in, and would otherwise continue to result in, a systematic excess of flat-rate addition payments over VAT on inputs incurred by flat-rate farmers in that sector.

As the measure being introduced by Section 46 is an enabling provision, it is not necessary to delay its implementation as suggested. The review by Revenue will provide an opportunity for the sector under review to change its structures as necessary and there is no specified time in which the Minister for Finance must decide on restrictions to the flat-rate scheme. The Minister for Finance will have the ability to delay signing an Order to restrict the flat-rate addition, if he believes that the effected agricultural sector are rearranging their business structures, contractual arrangements or models to provide that no systemic excess of flat-rate addition payments will incur.

### **VAT Rate Application**

185. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether the 9% VAT rate may be considered as state aid in view of the fact that it gives a select number of sectors a competitive advantage. [34911/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** VAT rating is governed by the EU VAT Directive (2006/112/EC), with which Irish VAT law must comply. Article 98 of the EU VAT Directive allows Member States to apply up to two reduced VAT rates of no less than 5% to any of the goods or services listed in Annex III of that Directive. The 9% VAT rate applicable in Ireland to the supply of certain goods and services related to the tourist industry complies with Article 98 and Annex III of the EU VAT Directive, as all the goods and services to which the 9% applies are listed in Annex III. Where the application of a VAT rate is in compliance with the EU VAT Directive, it is compatible with the proper functioning of the internal market and cannot be considered to constitute a form of State Aid.

## **Tax Code**

186. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider the introduction of a tax-free allowance for landlord's rental income in line with rent supplement caps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35005/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I assume that the Deputy's proposal would envisage a tax free allowance for rental income received from a tenant in receipt of rent supplement, and not a general tax free allowance for all residential landlords in respect of rental income from all tenants in line with rent supplement caps.

To introduce a tax exemption for rental income received in line with rent supplement caps would, in effect, see the State provide a double subsidy: first to the tenant who is in receipt of the housing support, and second to the landlord who receives the income tax-free. Such an incentive could also give rise to distortions in the housing market. It would incentivise landlords to only accept tenants in receipt of rent supplement, and as a consequence put increased pressure on tenants currently renting in the private market, which could potentially result in increased need for social housing supports. It could also create particular difficulties for tenants who transition out of rent supplement for example as a result of gaining employment or increased income as their landlord would be incentivised to end the tenancy in order to continue renting to a person in receipt of rent supplement.

The Deputy may be aware that last year in Budget 2016 I introduced a new incentive to encourage landlords to commit to letting their property to tenants in receipt of social housing supports for a minimum period of three years. The incentive acts by allowing such landlords to claim a deduction for 100% of qualifying mortgage interest relief, in place of the 75% deduction which currently applies in respect of rented residential property in general. This was introduced as a time-limited measure, specifically targeted to improve certainty of supply of rental housing for such tenants.

In Budget 2017, as part of a package of measures designed to support housing supply, I announced that a full 100% deduction of qualifying interest for all residential landlords will be restored. However in order to preserve the current incentive for landlords to house tenants in receipt of social housing supports, full deductibility for other landlords is being restored on an incremental basis over the next 5 years.

It is my view that these measures are more appropriate than a tax free allowance of the nature proposed by the Deputy.

## **Carbon Tax Exemptions**

187. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Finance his views on an opinion expressed by a co-op (details supplied). [35009/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** In Budget 2017, I announced the exemption from carbon tax for fuel used to create high efficiency electricity in combined heat and power plants. The dual process of using energy to create usable heat and power is regarded as a highly efficient energy process and makes use of the heat produced in the electricity generation instead of releasing it into the atmosphere. The rationale for providing a full relief from carbon tax for the fuel inputs is to incentivise the use and development of this highly efficient technology, thereby contributing to reducing Ireland's emissions particularly in the context of our binding 2020 emission targets in both the heat and energy sectors. This measure is also de-



signed to facilitate the use of biomass CHP as a renewable power source, further building on the Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff which has been in place since 2012. The relief will be based on certification by the Commission for Energy Regulation that the fuel used has been to generate high-efficiency electricity.

I also announced in Budget 2017 the commencement of the carbon tax relief for biomass content of solid fuel which was legislated for in Finance (No. 2) Act 2013. The measure is designed to incentivise alternatives to fossil fuel and stimulate the market for low carbon fuel. The introduction of two thresholds provides an incentive to develop blended solid fuels with a higher biomass content. To further the environmental rationale, this relief is available only for low smoke solid fuels.

*Question No. 188 answered with Question No. 184.*

### **Tax Code**

189. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address the issues raised in correspondence (details supplied) in relation to stay-at-home parents who are facing financial discrimination. [35152/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The system of individualisation has been in the tax code since 1999, and is now integral to the overall system. When first announced, the stated purposes of individualisation were, essentially, to ease the burden on single persons (65% of the work force), to take workers on the average industrial wage out of the higher rate of tax and more generally to facilitate a reduction in the numbers paying tax at the higher rate. Prior to this, a second spouse faced the marginal rate of tax on the first euro (or Punt as it was then) earned in his or her own name.

Individualisation was progressed to some extent in later years but never completed. The result is that we now have a hybrid system. Up to €9,000 of the standard-rate band can be transferred between spouses and the full married personal tax credits, can be allocated in full to one spouse. Because the income tax system allows married couples to choose whether to be jointly or individually assessed, there can be a difference between the tax liabilities incurred by married couples on the same household income, depending on the method of assessment chosen.

However, it is important to stress that married one-earner couples on average earnings are not affected by the different standard rate bands under the current structure as the married one-income band standard rate band of €42,800 is in excess of the current average wage. Furthermore, the €9,000 transferable standard rate band, which married one earner couples can avail of, reduces their income tax liability to around half that incurred by a single individual earning a similar income.

The difference in treatment for couples depending on whether one or both work may be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that there are costs associated with earning an income, such as travel and childcare costs. Such costs are likely to be greater if two persons, rather than one person, work outside the home to earn the same gross income.

It is my view that individualisation has now bedded into the tax system to a degree where it cannot be changed easily, and there are no plans to do so. It was estimated last year that to complete or to reverse individualisation would cost in the region of €800 million. Such a cost, if it related to the reversal of individualisation, would result in an increased burden of taxation on other cohorts of taxpayers including single parent families and single individuals.



However, you may be aware that a Home Carer Tax Credit may be claimed where one spouse works primarily in the home to care for a dependent person, such as a child or an elderly relative. This credit was introduced in the context of the move towards individualisation of the tax system, in recognition of the choices made by families where one spouse stays at home to care for children or the elderly. In the recent Budget, I announced an increase in this credit from €1,000 to €1,100 per year, effectively allowing the credit to shelter family income of €5,500 from taxation. This follows on from last year's Budget where the credit was increased from €810 to €1,000.

The constitutionality of the various provisions of the tax code are ultimately a matter for the courts to decide, where issues are put before them. However, I would point out that due regard is given to the provisions of the Constitution when constructing the tax code.

The issue of tax individualisation was considered by the Commission on Taxation in 2009 and that body recommended no change should be made to the current system. It concluded that the current system represents a balance between, on the one hand, acknowledging the choices families make in caring for children and, on the other, taking account of the need to encourage labour market participation.

As regards future measures, in the Programme for a Partnership Government there is a commitment to ask the Oireachtas to continue to phase out the USC as part of a wider medium-term income tax reform plan that keeps the tax base broad, reduces excessive tax rates for middle income earners, and limits the benefit for high earners. The changes introduced in the last three Budgets have commenced reducing the income tax burden with an emphasis on low and middle income earners, and it is my intention to continue this process in future Budgets, as fiscal resources allow.

In relation to childcare, this is primarily a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in the first instance. Minister Zappone has announced the introduction of a new Affordable Childcare Scheme which will be available to all families both single income and double income. It is important to recognise that the Affordable Childcare Scheme is only one element of a broader set of commitments and supports aimed at parents and children. The provision of improved services for centre-based care is very important, as also are the needs of children who do not attend such services.

In this regard, Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People contains a commitment to produce Ireland's first-ever National Early Years Strategy. The intention is to deliver a cross-cutting strategy which will take a joined-up, whole of Government approach to the issue of supporting children and their families during the early years (0-6 years). The drafting of the National Early Years Strategy is at an advanced stage and the Department of Children will hold an Open Policy Debate on the strategy before the end of the year with a view to publication shortly thereafter. Minister Zappone and her Department are open to hearing views about supports for parents raising children at home.

### **Agriculture Schemes**

190. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Finance the status of an investigation by the European Commission (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35154/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** My Department and the Revenue Commissioners have a legal obligation to protect taxpayer confidentiality and due to the small num-

ber of taxpayers involved in this particular sector, they are precluded from commenting on the matter.

I would point out, however, that Section 46 of the recently published Finance Bill provides for a restriction of the flat-rate scheme with effect from 1 January 2017. The amendment gives the Minister for Finance the power to make an order excluding particular agricultural goods or agricultural services from the flat-rate addition scheme. The power can be exercised where the Revenue Commissioners has carried out a review and the Minister is satisfied that, because of the business structures, contractual arrangements or models in place in a particular sector, the application of the flat-rate addition within that sector has resulted in, and would otherwise continue to result in, a systematic excess of flat-rate addition payments over VAT on inputs incurred by flat-rate farmers in that sector.

### **Insurance Costs**

191. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Finance the measures he proposes to implement to deal with the escalating costs of insurance premiums; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there have been unacceptable increases in insurance costs for some sectors such as licensed premises; his views on the survey carried out by an organisation (details supplied) showing that 37% of publicans had encountered difficulties in securing insurance cover for their premises and the substantial increase in insurance costs for the majority of such premises; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35189/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland, can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept.

This inability to intervene in such matters is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products.

However, I do accept that it is possible for the State to play a role in helping to stabilise the market. Consequently, I established the Cost of Insurance Working Group and appointed Minister of State Eoghan Murphy as Chair. The initial focus of the Working Group is on the factors that are contributing to the cost and availability of motor insurance and identifying what short-term, medium-term and long-term measures can be introduced to help consumers and businesses.

It is likely however that because of some of the common factors underlying all insurance lines that many of the recommendations being considered will also address the difficulties being experienced in the cost and availability of other types of insurance, including public liability insurance.

The Working Group has met with a number of stakeholders during the course of its work, including the representative body that the Deputy refers to. This consultation included a presentation of to the Minister for State of its survey findings.

Finally, it should be noted that at the end of October 2016, the Working Group provided me with an initial set of emerging recommendations. Since then, the Working Group has been working to finalise the Report and developing an action plan to enable the relevant Government Departments and Offices to commence the implementation of agreed priority actions. The re-

port and action plan will detail any legislative or regulatory changes that may be required and will include a detailed timeline for implementation.

### **Public Procurement Contracts**

192. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the increasing concerns of contractors within the construction sector in relation to the procurement of public contracts due to unfair competition from contractors, particularly from Northern Ireland, which have a lower cost base and continue to gain further advantage with the procurement of building materials and labour in Northern Ireland due to the weakness of sterling; if contractors, regardless of their base, are obliged to pay the statutory labour rates here along with other statutory taxes and levies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35190/16]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I would like to assure the Deputy that I am aware of the ongoing issues in the construction sector including the challenges faced by contractors. However, as regards procurement, under EU law, public contracts above certain values must be advertised EU-wide and awarded to the most competitive tender in an open and transparent process. The aim is to promote an open, competitive and non-discriminatory public procurement regime which delivers value for money. It would be a breach of the rules for a public body to favour or discriminate against particular candidates on grounds of location or nationality and there are legal remedies which may be used against any public bodies for infringing these rules.

With regards to statutory labour rates, all workers posted to Ireland from another EU Member State have the protection of all Irish employment rights legislation in the same way as employees who have an Irish contract of employment. Therefore, once it is clear that a person is working in the State under a contract of employment, on a full-time or part-time basis, that person is entitled to be paid the statutory wage rate applicable under Irish law.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that non-resident contractors are obliged to register for and pay relevant taxes for activities carried out in the State. This includes, Relevant Contracts Tax, Value Added Tax, Employers PAYE and depending on the circumstances income tax or corporation tax.

#### **Relevant Contracts Tax**

Relevant Contract Tax (RCT) applies to payments to subcontractors on construction, meat processing and forestry operations carried out within the State. Relevant contracts must first be registered on Revenue's eRCT system and principals must subsequently notify Revenue of all payments to subcontractors made on relevant contracts via Revenue's e-RCT system.

RCT applies irrespective of whether the Principal or subcontractor or both are resident outside the State. If the work is being carried out in the State, RCT must be operated.

#### **VAT**

All non-resident principal contractors (individuals, partnerships and companies) who are engaged in Relevant Contracts in the construction industry in the State must register for VAT and account for VAT under the VAT reverse charge rule.

#### **Employers PAYE**

All employers, including non-resident employers, must register for PAYE as an employer

and operate PAYE/PRSI/USC in respect of income attributable to the performance in the State of an employment.

### **Income Tax/Corporation Tax**

A non-resident contractor which has a permanent establishment which lasts for more than 6 months is liable for income Tax if a sole trader or corporation Tax if a company, on the profits arising from the Permanent Establishment.

Under Ireland's Double Taxation Agreements the term "Permanent Establishment" expressly includes a building site or construction or installation project.

### **School Transport**

193. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) who is a medical card holder is not eligible to receive free school transport for their children and therefore it costs them a significant €700 per annum for their children to travel from their home to their school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34416/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

Currently over 113,000 children, including some 10,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in approximately 4,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

In general, children are eligible for school transport if they are attending their nearest school and satisfy the requisite distance criteria.

In this regard Bus Éireann has confirmed that the children in question are not attending their nearest school and are therefore not eligible for school transport.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only.

Transport on a concessionary basis is subject to a number of conditions which are detailed in the School Transport Scheme such as the existence of spare seats on the bus after all eligible children have been catered for and payment of the school transport charge. Only children who are eligible for school transport and who hold valid Medical Cards (GMS Scheme) are exempt from paying the annual charge. The maximum annual family charge for school transport is €650.

The terms of the School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

### **Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

194. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for assisted technology in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34533/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Spe-

cial Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports. SENOs make recommendations to my Department where Assistive Technology is required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in making recommendations for support, which is set out in my Department's Circular 0010/2013.

In order to qualify for equipment under the Assistive Technology scheme, a child must have been diagnosed with a physical or communicative disability and must also have a recommendation in a professional assessment that the equipment is essential in order to allow the child to access the curriculum. It must also be clear that the existing I.T. equipment in the school is insufficient to meet the child's needs.

I can confirm that an incomplete application for Assistive Technology was received for the child in question. Officials from my Department have reverted to the SENO seeking further information to support the application. On receipt of the requested information, a decision will issue to the school regarding this matter, following full consideration of the application.

### **Apprenticeship Programmes**

195. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 3.12; the actions taken to date by SOLAS to update skills forecasts ensuring a supply of construction workers is available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35086/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** In September SOLAS published the 2016 National Skills Bulletin where shortage indicators are highlighted across a range of construction-related occupations from professional to craft to skilled operative. SOLAS has finalised its latest forecast for craft apprenticeship including construction-related apprenticeships. This forecast, in addition to the data and trends provided in the 2016 National Skills Bulletin feeds into the annual SOLAS/ETB service planning exercise which incorporates the planning of construction related apprenticeships by SOLAS in conjunction with the Education and Training Board sector and Institutes of Technology.

SOLAS are also in discussion with the Construction Industry Federation to evaluate construction skill needs across a range of non-apprenticeship areas. As a result SOLAS is targeting specific construction related skills shortages in its service planning with the Education and Training Boards.

A campaign to promote apprenticeship is currently being developed by SOLAS in consultation with key partners including the Apprenticeship Council. The campaign will raise awareness and promote the value of apprenticeship for individual apprentices and for employers and it will cover both existing apprenticeships and the new apprenticeships now coming on stream and will include a new apprenticeship website.

### **Student Accommodation**

196. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 4.7 to prepare and publish a national student accommodation strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35093/16]



197. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 4.8; if he will outline the findings of the initial assessment with regard to bringing on stream proposals capable of delivering an additional 7,000 student accommodation places by end of 2019; if he will identify the locations and number of units to be provided in each location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35094/16]

198. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 4.9 to establish dedicated delivery structures, such as AHBs in the higher education institutions sector to access Housing Finance Agency funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35095/16]

199. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 4.11 to establish funding mechanisms for institutes of technology to support the development of their student accommodation capacity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35097/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 196 to 199, inclusive, together.

Alleviating the housing crisis is a cross-Government priority and the available analysis indicates that the lack of suitable rental accommodation for students is driving up rents in the private rental sector, particularly in areas where demand for rental property is high. This is contributing to what we know is already a considerable strain on some students and their families to participate in higher education with knock-on effects on completion rates. The reality is that dealing comprehensively with this issue will only take place as part of a more general programme to address the major housing and homelessness issue.

Accordingly, my colleague Mr. Simon Coveney T.D., Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, on 19 July 2016 published "*Rebuilding Ireland – an Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*", following Government approval of this comprehensive and ambitious Plan. The full plan can be accessed at: [http://rebuildingireland.ie/Rebuilding%20Ireland\\_Action%20Plan.pdf](http://rebuildingireland.ie/Rebuilding%20Ireland_Action%20Plan.pdf).

My Department worked closely with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in developing this Plan, with a specific focus on student accommodation, and I very much welcome the commitments contained in the plan and I look forward to working with colleagues on a cross-Departmental basis to ensure that the commitments contained in the Plan are implemented as soon as practicable.

The current position in respect of the specific measures relating to student accommodation as detailed in *Rebuilding Ireland* is as follows:

*(i) The Department of Education and Skills in conjunction with a number of other key stakeholders will prepare and publish a national student accommodation strategy, which will set out a broad framework for delivery of an enhanced level of accommodation and which will inform local authority housing strategies and the land management process in general, in order to provide suitably located and affordable sites. This will be prepared with a view to developing a national policy on specific needs and mechanisms for the development of appropriate on-campus and off-campus student accommodation.*

Action: *Rebuilding Ireland* details that this plan will be in place by Q2 2017 and my Depart-



ment is working on the development of this plan with a view to meeting the timescale envisaged in *Rebuilding Ireland*.

*(ii) My Department will work with stakeholders to prioritise and progress viable projects to provide additional student accommodation in key urban areas. This will be done with a view to bringing on stream proposals capable of delivering an additional 7,000 student accommodation places by end 2019, on or off campus, in addition to projects already committed to.*

Action: *Rebuilding Ireland* details that the initial assessment will be completed during Q4 2016 and officials from my Department are working closely with officials from the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government with a view to meeting the timescale envisaged in *Rebuilding Ireland*.

*(iii) Dedicated delivery structures, such as Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) will be established in the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) sector to access Housing Finance Agency (HFA) funding, and complete any required policy, regulatory or legislative changes necessary. This will be done with a view to providing additional funding mechanisms for the HEI sector, in conjunction with the HFA.*

*(iv) The Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government will enable student accommodation projects for 100 units or more to go straight to An Bord Pleanála, as well as maximise the opportunities for joint venture projects on local authority sites to proceed through the Part 8 process and prepare guidance on planning policies around student accommodation developments. This will be done to enhance certainty and reduce delivery timescales and costs associated with bringing student accommodation proposals forward.*

Action: To facilitate early action on new processes and structures which are key to the delivery of housing and the regulation of the housing sector, the Government approved the publication of the General Scheme of a Planning and Development (Housing and Residential Tenancies) Bill in September and is now prioritising its drafting and full publication to enable a number of legislative actions and reforms highlighted across the five pillars of the Action Plan. This includes facilitating (for a limited time-period) planning applications for large-scale housing developments and student accommodation developments, being made directly to An Bord Pleanála and facilitating Higher Education Institutes to borrow monies from the Housing Finance Agency for the purposes of financing student accommodation provision. Officials from my Department have been linking in directly with officials in the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and with representatives of the Higher Education Institutions around the modalities and practicalities for implementing these measures once the proposed legislation has been implemented.

*(v) The Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government will help to fund a Student Housing Officer to work with the Union of Students in Ireland, local authorities, AHBs and housing providers, to identify and expand short-term capacity enhancing measures in the student accommodation sector. This will be done with a view to assisting students in finding appropriate accommodation.*

Action: Funding for a Student Housing Officer to work with the Union of Students in Ireland has been agreed for 2016 with a commitment to examine future funding needs going forward. This builds on the funding of €30,000 which was provided to Union of Students in Ireland (USI) by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to fund their 2016 #HomesForStudy campaign.

*(vi) Funding mechanisms will be established for Institutes of Technology to support the development of their student accommodation capacity. This is to facilitate the Institute of Tech-*

*nology sector in developing their potential for on-campus student accommodation through addressing current borrowing capacity and funding constraints.*

Action: I believe that a borrowing framework for the IOT sector would deliver significant benefits. My officials are in discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to examine ways Institutes of Technology can be facilitated in developing on-campus student accommodation through addressing borrowing capacity and funding constraints.

*(vii) The Department of Housing Planning Community and Local Government in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills will carry out an assessment of scope for provision of additional student accommodation on local authority or other publicly-owned lands with a view to maximising the potential for student accommodation provision on suitable sites as part of mixed developments.*

Action: Work is ongoing in the Department of Housing, Planning Community and Local Government on developing a comprehensive database of publicly owned lands in key developable areas with a view to identifying land suitable for housing development. The database of publicly owned lands will also inform the scope for provision of additional student accommodation.

In addition to these developments, I should point out that a number of our Higher Education Institutions have Student Accommodation projects ongoing, or in the pipeline, with a number of additional on-campus Student Accommodation bed-spaces coming online from September 2016. Maynooth University have 296 new on-campus bed spaces, and UCD have 350 new on-campus bed spaces, which came on stream for the commencement of the 2016/17 academic year. Six other Higher Education Institutions are currently engaged in, or going through the planning phases for student accommodation projects, namely National University of Ireland Galway, Trinity College Dublin, University of Limerick, Dublin City University, University College Cork and Dublin Institute of Technology.

The Actions in the Plan in relation to Student Accommodation build on the report, Student Accommodation: Demand & Supply, which was published last year by the Minister for Education and Skills. The full report can be accessed at:

*<http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Report-on-Student-Accommodation-Demand-and-Supply.pdf>.*

The previous Minister for Education and Skills introduced two immediate actions following the publication of this report. Firstly, and as already pointed out, funding was provided by the HEA to the Union of Students' (USI) in Ireland to progress short-term solutions for students in need of accommodation. This funding allowed USI to develop their homes.usi.ie website, to communicate more effectively to students and homeowners, and to carry out research into this important issue.

Secondly, this led to the establishment of an inter-departmental steering group to examine the recommendations contained in the HEA Report and to provide a coordinating mechanism to ensure that the higher education institutions have access to information on new potential funding and delivery models.

## **School Curriculum**

200. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will implement new marking systems for the examinations to take into account students whose schools

have been closed under health and safety and child protection provisions. [34437/16]

201. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide grinds or extra hours for leaving certificate students so that they can get their syllabus finished in time for their examinations; and if the date for the leaving certificate can be deferred so as to enable the students to complete their leaving certificates syllabus. [34438/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 200 and 201 together.

The Leaving Certificate programme is designed to be delivered over a full two years with a considerable degree of flexibility available to schools in how and when the full range of syllabus material is covered. Where loss of class time occurs for any exceptional reason, schools and teachers will seek to ensure that their students are supported in covering all of the necessary course material in to order prepare adequately for examinations. The commitment of our teachers and schools to their students is acknowledged and appreciated in this respect.

### **Schools Building Projects**

202. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will confirm that a school (details supplied) has applied for funding to secure a permanent site for the school; the reasons for the significant delay in the construction of the permanent building for the planned 1,000 pupils; and when the work will be completed. [34444/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the Design Team for the school building project in question has recently been authorised to proceed to tender and subject to no issues arising it is envisaged that construction should commence in the first half of 2017 with a construction period of 24 months.

### **Schools Building Projects**

203. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress by his Department in conjunction with the County Donegal ETB in the design and tender process for the new buildings for a school (details supplied) that is to commence construction in 2017; if there is a delay in his Department sanctioning the ETB hiring a design team; if so, the reason for such a delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34455/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Project Brief and Budget for the new building referred to by the Deputy are currently being finalised in my Department. My Department expects to be able to issue these to the ETB in question shortly. This will enable the ETB to appoint a Design Team to progress the project.

### **Apprenticeship Programmes**

204. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the proposal by KWETB for a new national training centre for pre-apprenticeship and post-apprenticeship training in Maynooth, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34461/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**

The proposal from Kildare Wicklow ETB (KWETB) for the development of a new Education and Training Facility in Maynooth, County Kildare, requires a substantial capital investment.

In May this year my Department informed KWETB that there is currently no dedicated capital funding for Further Education and Training projects and that the Department's overall capital budget for 2016 was fully allocated. My Department's 2017 capital allocation is also fully allocated. However, my Department, in consultation with SOLAS, will keep this proposal under consideration in the context of competing demands for capital investment should capital resources become available in 2017 and also in the context of capital estimates for future years.

### **School Accommodation**

205. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if funding will be approved for additional accommodation at a school (details supplied); and if he will expedite the approval needed. [34476/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has completed its assessment of an application from the school in question.

In that regard, my Department has informed the school authority that it is not in a position to approve the school's application concerned as it considers that the level of school accommodation is adequate to meet its staffing needs.

### **Schools Building Projects**

206. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for a post-primary school for the Firhouse and Ballycullen, Dublin 24, area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34487/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department uses a Geographical Information System to identify the areas under increased demographic pressure nationwide. The system uses data from the Central Statistics Office, Ordnance Survey Ireland, the Department of Social Protection and information from my Department's own databases. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic analyses to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

Among the new schools announced to open in 2017 and 2018 arising from such demographic analyses is a new post-primary school which will open in 2018 to cater for the demographic needs of the Firhouse/Oldbawn school planning area. The patronage process for this school was recently completed and Educate Together were awarded patronage of the school. When fully developed, this school will provide 1,000 pupil places, supplementing provision in the greater area.

Officials in my Department have been working closely with officials from South Dublin County Council under the Memorandum of Understanding in order to identify and procure a suitable site for the new post-primary school. A comprehensive technical assessment of a number of potentially suitable site options has been undertaken by my Department in conjunction with the Local Authority. The most suitable site will be identified following this process and negotiations with the Landowner will commence. It is not possible to indicate a timeline for the completion of the acquisition of a site for the school due to the complexity of the conveyancing process.

The building project for the school is included in my Department's Six Year Capital Investment Programme 2016-2021 and is listed to proceed to tender and construction during the period 2019 to 2021.

The school will open as scheduled in September 2018 in suitable interim accommodation pending delivery of its permanent accommodation.

### **School Accommodation**

207. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of proposed additional rooms at two national schools (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34488/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Funding was approved under the Additional Accommodation Scheme 2015 to enable the Boards of Management of the schools in question to provide additional accommodation for their schools.

I am pleased to inform the Deputy that additional funding was recently approved to enable the project to proceed to construction.

### **School Accommodation**

208. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the stage his plans are at for the provision of permanent buildings for two schools (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34489/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The permanent accommodation for the schools to which the Deputy refers is being provided under my Department's Design & Build Programme.

An application for planning permission for the development was lodged in July following which a request for additional information was received. A reply was submitted to South Dublin County Council on the 21st October 2016. My Department awaits the outcome of the planning process.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

209. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the stage his plans are at for a post-primary school for the Citywest and Saggart areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34490/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department uses a Geographical Information System to identify the areas under increased demographic pressure nationwide. The system uses data from the Central Statistics Office, Ordnance Survey Ireland, the Department of Social Protection and information from my Department's own databases. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic analyses to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

For school planning purposes, Citywest falls within the Tallaght school planning area. There are currently six post-primary schools in this area serving the 20 primary schools. Among the



six post-primary schools is a new school which opened in September 2016 in the Kingswood area of Tallaght. This is a multi-denominational school under the patronage of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board and when fully developed it will provide 1,000 student places.

With regard to the Saggart area, for school planning purposes this falls within the Rathcoole/Saggart school planning area. There is currently one post-primary school in this area serving the four primary schools. A building project for the post-primary school is included on my Department's Six Year Capital Investment Programme 2016-2021 and is listed to proceed to construction during 2016.

Among the new schools announced to open in 2017 and 2018 to cater for increased demographic needs, is a new post-primary school under the patronage of Educate Together which will open in 2018 in the Firhouse/Oldbawn school planning area, which is adjacent to the Tallaght school planning area. When fully developed, this school will provide 1,000 pupil places, supplementing provision in the greater area.

As with all school planning areas nationwide, the demographic data for the Tallaght and Rathcoole/Saggart school planning areas is being kept under review by my Department to take account of updated enrolment data and capacity increases in these and adjoining school planning areas.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

210. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a new secondary school for the Malahide and Portmarnock areas of County Dublin, as announced in November 2015; if he has identified locations for these proposed schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34504/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy is aware the building project for the new post primary school to serve Malahide/Portmarnock is included in the 6 year construction programme that was announced last November and is listed to go to construction in 2019-21.

Officials in my Department are liaising with officials in Fingal County Council in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the identification and acquisition of a suitable location for the school.

The technical feasibility of an identified site option is currently being comprehensively assessed by officials from my Department in liaison with officials from the Council.

Due to commercial sensitivities relating to site acquisitions generally I am not in a position to provide further details at this time.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

211. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a new secondary school for the Swords area of County Dublin, as announced in November 2015; if he has identified locations for this proposed school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34505/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy is aware,



the building project for the new post primary school to serve Swords is included in the 6 year construction programme that was announced last November and is listed to go to construction in 2019-21.

Officials in my Department have worked closely with officials in Fingal County Council in respect of the identification and acquisition of a suitable site for this project. Conveyancing is currently under way in respect of a site identified for the school.

Due to commercial sensitivities relating to site acquisitions generally I am unfortunately not in a position to provide further details regarding the permanent location at this time. However, the patron of the school, Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB, will be informed of the location as soon as it is possible to do so.

### **Minor Works Scheme**

212. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the minor works grant for a school (details supplied) is due to be paid in November 2016; if his attention has been drawn to the concern the uncertainty is causing in relation to the staff, students and parents of the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34511/16]

264. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a minor works grant (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34898/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 212 and 264 together.

My Department is currently determining the likely end-year position on capital expenditure 2016 and I expect to be able to make an announcement regarding the Minor Works Grant 2016/2017, including the school referred to by the deputy, before the end of the week.

### **Library Services Funding**

213. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter regarding funding for a new library (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34550/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Department of Education and Skills has been made aware of the challenges faced by the third level institution in question with respect to its current library facilities.

There are many competing demands on the limited capital budget for higher education and the library development proposal will be considered within the context of competing demands. I am not in a position to commit to a funding allocation at this point.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

214. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to build a new school at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34557/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Department sought to

purchase a site near Ballinacurra, to accommodate new primary school provision for the Middleton area. However, as planning permission was not obtained for the site in question alternative arrangements have since been made for the provision of the schools concerned.

### **Third Level Staff**

215. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Question No. 66 of 3 November 2016, whereby in Irish universities some staff receive permanency whereas others, mainly non-academic staff, have recourse to only one-, two- and three-year fixed-term contracts; the number of these staff that have had permanent and pensionable contracts provided to them since 2009; the years in which they were provided; the relative grades; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34566/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Report of the Chair of the Expert Group on Fixed Term and Part-Time issues in Lecturing in Ireland was published in July 2016 and the Report contains a number of recommendations that will assist in addressing concerns raised about the level of part-time and fixed-term employment in lecturing in the third level sector. My Department has issued directions to the sector to implement the recommendations contained in the report in accordance with the terms of the Lansdowne Road Agreement and it is my understanding that the institutions are doing so.

Under the Universities Act 1997, universities in Ireland are autonomous institutions and therefore have responsibility for the day to day management of their own affairs, including issues relating to the awarding of permanent and fixed-term contracts. My Department does not hold or collect data in relation to the number of staff who have had permanent and pensionable contracts provided to them since 2009; the years in which they were provided or the relative grades.

### **Student Grant Scheme Eligibility**

216. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the criteria for SUSI grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34587/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Very significant numbers of third-level students move out of home to go to college and continue to be supported by their parents while in full-time education. Confirmation that a student is living separately from his/her parents is, of itself, not sufficient to establish independent status. When considering whether a student meets the conditions to be assessed independently of his or her parents, grant awarding authorities are obliged to satisfy themselves beyond doubt, that an acceptable degree of proof of independent living in the relevant period has been submitted by the grant applicant.

The onus is on the grant applicant to provide the necessary documentary evidence as requested by the relevant grant awarding authority. In this regard, a grant awarding authority will seek to assist students in identifying relevant documentation.

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

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in their case, an appeal

form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board.

### **Industrial Disputes**

217. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if non-union teachers on short-term contracts who are available for work will be paid by his Department for the period their schools are closed due to industrial action; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34601/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Circular letter 0070-2016, issued by my Department sets out the procedures to be followed by schools in respect of the one day work stoppages. It is a matter for the management of each school to make appropriate arrangements to record the attendance or absence of all Department-paid teaching and non-teaching staff employed by the school.

Circular letter 0071-2016 sets out the procedures to be followed by schools where they closed as a result of the withdrawal from S&S duties by ASTI members on Monday 7 November 2016. Where schools were closed to students as a result of the withdrawal from S&S duties by ASTI members, those teachers who completed and returned the form in the appendix to circular 0071/2016 will be paid as normal for the closure. Absences by teachers for authorised leave should again be recorded by school management in the normal way. Those teachers who did not submit a completed form under circular letter 0071/2016 will not be paid for the closure.

In general, it would be expected that non-union teachers would have completed the form marking themselves as available for all duties and therefore would be paid for the days in question.

### **Minor Works Scheme Applications**

218. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the minor works scheme grant will be issued to primary schools for 2016-2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34630/16]

223. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the list of schools in south Kildare receiving the minor works grant will be notified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34643/16]

259. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when payments will be made under the minor works scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34804/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 218, 223 and 259 together.

My Department is currently determining the likely end-year position on capital expenditure 2016 and I expect to be able to make an announcement regarding the Minor Works Grant 2016/2017 before the end of the week.

### **Departmental Funding**

219. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the capital funding his Department has allocated to projects in County Waterford at primary, post-primary and third levels in the past three years. [34631/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The total capital funding spent on projects in County Waterford at primary, post-primary and third level in the past three years is in the following table.

| Year         | 2014        | 2015        | 2016       | TOTAL       |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Primary      | €12,342,575 | €11,011,239 | €6,716,983 | €30,070,797 |
| Post Primary | €1,429,390  | €1,590,771  | €1,327,720 | €4,347,881  |
| Third Level  | €0.00       | €900,000    | €5,147,959 | €6,047,959  |
|              |             |             |            | €40,466,637 |

### School Accommodation Provision

220. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of future student accommodation to meet requirements at a school (details supplied); and when he envisages a school extension will be approved. [34632/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Deputy will be aware that my Department has conveyed approval to the school in question for additional accommodation to cater for increasing enrolments.

My Department is currently liaising with the National Development and Finance Agency (NDFA) in order to advance the provision of this additional accommodation. At present, various design options for the additional accommodation are being considered as part of the design process. The school authority is being kept informed of developments.

### Education Data

221. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if current statistics on the ethnic and religious diversity in primary schools are available; if so, if he will release the statistics for the school year 2015-16; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34641/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The National School Annual Census is the definitive source of statistics on primary pupils up to and including the 2015/2016 academic year. The Census does not contain information on ethnic or cultural background or on religion. The Primary Online Database (POD) which replaces the National School Annual Census as the definitive source of statistics from the 2016/2017 academic year onwards contains this information. Data from POD for the 2015/2016 academic year (which will be indicative only) are in process of being edited at present and will be made available early in 2017.

### Schools Building Projects Status

222. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a school (details supplied) is in a poor state of repair and entirely unsuited to the children's needs; and if he will bring forward the construction of a new school which is currently scheduled for 2019. [34642/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school in question is included in my Department's 6 Year Construction Programme. My Department is aware of the school's accommodation needs and will be liaising with the school in due course in the context of progressing the project into the architectural planning process.

*Question No. 223 answered with Question No. 218.*

### **Minor Works Scheme Applications**

224. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) will receive an answer to its grant application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34644/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department is currently determining the likely end-year position on capital expenditure 2016 and I expect to be able to make an announcement regarding the Minor Works Grant 2016/2017 before the end of the week.

The Minor Works Grant issues to primary schools without the need for primary schools to submit an application.

### **Tax Collection**

225. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a reply and remedy will issue to a person (details supplied) in respect of an error by his Department regarding an incorrect rate of PRSI; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34647/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Officials in my Department are making arrangements to issue the relevant documentation regarding the misclassification of PRSI to the person referred to by the Deputy. When the required documentation has been received any refund of PRSI due will be processed as soon as possible.

### **Teachers' Remuneration**

226. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the fact that some ASTI members that opted out of supervision and substitution duties before the Haddington Road agreement are facing having their salary deducted despite the fact that they are no longer contracted to carry out those duties and cannot withdraw from them (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34659/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Supervision and substitution duties are compulsory for all teachers since the Haddington Road Agreement. As part of the S&S scheme finalised at this time a limited group of teachers were allowed to opt-out of the duties in return for a pay reduction. Department Circular 0006/2014 states that with effect from the beginning of the 2013/14 school year, participation in the Supervision and Substitution scheme will be compulsory for all teachers, save for those who avail of the opt-out arrangement.

The ASTI directive instructed its members to withdraw from the Supervision and Substitution Scheme. The opt-out is an element of the S&S scheme and ASTI have directed all members to withdraw from that scheme in its entirety. Therefore, the 'opt-out' provided for under the scheme will not apply to ASTI members who are subject to the directive.

Where schools have been forced to close to students as a result of ASTI's withdrawal from supervision and substitution duties, ASTI members who have not made themselves available for S&S will not be paid for those days.

It is normal industrial relations practice that, where workers in industrial action withdraw from core elements of their work, resulting in the closure of the workplace, those workers would not be paid for those days.

### **Mental Health Awareness**

227. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will ensure that mental health awareness is promoted in schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34670/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department is strongly supportive of the promotion of positive mental health awareness in both primary and post-primary schools and provides support and resources in this area. The Department adopts a holistic and integrated approach to supporting the work of schools in promoting positive mental health and to supporting those with a broad range of problems, behavioural emotional and social.

The process spans the curriculum in schools, whole-school ethos, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, student support and pastoral care and the provision of professional development for teachers. It also involves other supports such as educational psychological services and guidance and counselling services, and the interface with other agencies, both nationally and locally.

My Department has issued Well-Being in Post Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention to all primary schools in 2013 and Well-Being in Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion 2015 to all schools. These guidelines were developed in conjunction with the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive. The Guidelines have been circulated to schools and are available on my Department's website.

The Guidelines are informed by consultation with key Education and Health partners and by the findings of current research. They provide practical guidance to schools on how they can promote health and mental well-being in an integrated school-wide way and they also provide evidence-based advice on how to support young people who may be at risk.

These guidelines complement existing measures to promote positive mental health at primary level. They build on the significant work already taking place in schools, including through the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) continuum of support model and the HSE, Health Promoting Schools Process.

The SPHE curriculum is mandatory up to junior cycle and contains a number of specific aims that are relevant to positive mental health and promotion of healthy lifestyles through exploration of substance use and misuse. These include promoting all aspects of the child's health, fostering in the child a sense of care and respect for himself/herself, and enabling the



young person to make informed decisions and choices about all aspects of life including health.

Schools are also encouraged to participate in the 'Health Promoting Schools' initiative, which is supported by the Department of Health. This European-wide programme aims to strengthen schools' capacity to be a healthy setting for learning and working by focusing at whole-school level on all the conditions that affect health and well-being. The results from the second Lifeskills survey which were published by my Department in January of this year indicate that approximately 40% of respondent primary schools are currently in the Health Promoting Schools initiative or are in the process of joining. My Department is working with the Department of Health to increase participation among primary schools.

### **School Staff**

228. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to reform the model of leadership in schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34763/16]

242. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the moratorium on filling certain promoted posts in schools will be lifted, since it was introduced as an emergency measure in 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34779/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 228 and 242 together.

It is widely accepted that the quality of school leadership is a key determinant of school effectiveness and the achievement of good learning outcomes. Indeed international research indicates that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning.

Budget 2016 provided 250 posts to second level schools to enable Deputy Principals to be more fully available to assist the school principal with the leadership of the school. At primary level Budget 2016 provided for additional release days for teaching principals to range between 15 and 25 days depending on the size of the school.

Budget 2017 has provided for the equivalent of 170 additional posts to second level schools to employ an additional Deputy Principal to assist the school principal with the leadership of the school. With effect from September 2017, schools with pupil enrolment in excess of 700 will be allocated additional Deputy Principal posts.

Budget 2017 also provides for the commencement of the restoration of middle management posts in both the primary and post-primary sector.

The recently established Centre for School Leadership (CSL) is a collaboration between my Department and the representative professional bodies for school principals. It has been created to offer professional and practical support to schools leaders. This support structure for leadership teams in schools will attempt to ensure that school leaders have opportunities to access, share and create knowledge and experience within their leadership roles. The work of the Centre draws on best international practice and research in the professional development of school leaders. Priorities for the Centre include a new post graduate qualification for aspiring school leaders, a mentoring programme for newly appointed school principals, coaching support for serving principals, a review and alignment of leadership programmes with Department standards.

My Department recently published "Looking at Our School 2016", a quality framework for

primary and post primary schools which is designed to support the efforts of teachers and school leaders, as well as the school system more generally, to strive for excellence in our schools. The current review of the post of responsibility structure in schools will also, in the context of restoration of posts, address the further development of a distributed leadership model in schools.

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

229. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide primary and post-primary average class size figures for Ireland and other EU member states; his plans to tackle large class size concerns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34764/16]

247. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider further improvements in the pupil-teacher ratio to help reduce the class size towards EU average in budget 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34784/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton)(Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 229 and 247 together.

Reducing class sizes has been a target of successive Governments. Budget 2016 provided for an improvement in the staffing schedule in primary schools by one point, from 1 teacher for every 28 pupils to 1 teacher for every 27 pupils for the 2016/17 school year.

The Programme for Government has a commitment to reduce class sizes and it is my intention to make further improvements to class sizes over the life of the Government.

Average class size and the ratio of teachers to students (PTR) are two important measures of the resources that we make available to schools. While our average class size at primary level is higher than the EU average, it is only slightly above the EU average in relation to the pupil-teacher ratio.

The latest statistics in relation to EU average class sizes refers to the 2013/2014 academic year and details are attached.

My focus in Budget 2017 was on obtaining additional funding to provide for demographic growth, additional resource teachers, curriculum reform and school leadership for our schools.

Budget 2017 sets out the resources available for schools for the 2017/18 school year. This Budget represents the start of a major reinvestment in education, and the first phase of implementation of the Action Plan for Education, aimed at becoming the best education system in Europe within a decade. The budget provides for over 2,400 additional teaching posts for our primary and post primary schools next year. The 2017/18 school year will see a significant increase in teacher numbers (almost 4,700) in our schools compared to the 2015/16 school year.

Latest statistics in relation to EU average class sizes refer to the 2013/2014 academic year:

| -             | Primary Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) | Primary Average Class Size | Post Primary (Pupil Teacher Ratio) PTR | Post Primary Average Class Size |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Ireland       | 16                                | 24.8                       | 14                                     | Not available                   |
| EU 22 average | 14                                | 20                         | 12                                     |                                 |

## **Commencement of Legislation**

230. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are remaining sections of the Teaching Council Act to be commenced; the timescale for commencing such sections; and the number of fitness-to-teach complaints received and processed to date since he commenced these provisions in July 2016. [34765/16]

232. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way in which he will address concerns that the Teaching Council, in the absence of a statutory complaints procedure for use at school level, will be expected to address complaints that are better resolved at local level and thus have fewer resources to deal with very serious complaints that may arise. [34767/16]

244. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans and the timescale in respect of complementing the fitness-to-teach provisions of the Teaching Council Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34781/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 230, 232 and 244 together.

The Teaching Council is the body with statutory authority for the regulation of the teaching profession. One of its key functions is to maintain the register of teachers in the State.

The Fitness to Teach (Part 5) provisions of the Teaching Council Acts were commenced on 25 July last in accordance with the commitment given in the Programme for a Partnership Government. This means that any person including a member of the public, an employer or a teacher may make a complaint to the Teaching Council about a registered teacher.

A complaint may proceed to an inquiry and, if deemed necessary, sanctions ranging from advice, admonishment or censure to suspension or removal from the register may be imposed by the Council. The Deputy will appreciate that the fitness to teach process is independent of my Department and the Deputy should contact the Council directly if she is seeking information on the number of complaints received.

The Deputy should note that, under Section 55 of the Teaching Council Act, the Council is obliged to submit an annual report of its activities and proceedings under the Act to me as Minister. Fitness to Teach was commenced on 25 July during the current reporting year. I look forward to the next annual report which will be due after 28 March next.

The provisions of the Education Act, 1998 (Sections 24 and 28) are relevant to the new investigatory powers of the Teaching Council under Part 5. Section 24 as amended provides for inter alia the appointment, suspension and dismissal of teachers by boards of management in accordance with procedures agreed from time to time between the Minister, the patron, recognised school management organisations and any recognised trade union and staff association representing teachers or other staff as appropriate. The agreed procedures provide for two separate and independent strands which should be utilised in appropriate circumstances:

- Procedures relating to professional competence issues
- Procedures relating to work, conduct and matters other than professional competence

The procedures are set out for schools in Circulars 60/2009 and 0071/2014 which are available on my Department's website.

Schools, as teachers' employers, will, therefore, continue to manage issues of teacher con-

duct or poor professional performance under Section 24 of the Education Act. Parental complaints in relation to teacher conduct or poor professional performance will, in general, also continue to be investigated in the first instance by a school under the Section 24 procedures.

Under the Teaching Council Act, the Teaching Council is obliged to pause its investigation of a complaint where a Section 24 process is in hand, except where there are good and sufficient reasons to do otherwise. I am advised by the Teaching Council that its Investigating Committee will take any Section 24 procedures into consideration as appropriate.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Programme for a Partnership Government provides, in addition, that the Government will introduce a charter for parents.

In that regard, my Department has been working on draft legislation to provide for the replacement of the current Section 28 of the Education Act, 1998. The legislation will provide the statutory basis for ministerial guidelines which will form the framework for a Parents' and Students' Charter in every school, following consultation with parents, students, recognised school management bodies and staff associations representing teachers and other appropriate bodies. Revised local complaint and grievance procedures will be a key part of the Charter.

I plan to make an announcement shortly on the draft legislation.

With the Teaching Council (Amendment) Act 2015 having been commenced in full, the only remaining section of the principal act to be commenced is Section 39. I am advised by the Teaching Council that Cosán, the national framework for teacher's learning (CPD) is now entering a development phase which is due to conclude in 2020. This will then pave the way for the commencement of this section of the Act.

### **Proposed Legislation**

231. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he proposes to publish a draft of the education (parent and student charter) Bill; the details of the proposed pre-legislative scrutiny process; and the timetable in this regard. [34766/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy will be aware the Programme for a Partnership Government provides that the Government will introduce a stronger complaints procedure and charter for parents.

My Department has been working on draft legislation to provide for replacing the current Section 28 of the Education Act, 1998. The legislation will provide the statutory basis for ministerial guidelines which will form the framework for a Parents' and Students' Charter in every school following consultation with parents, students, recognised school management bodies and staff associations representing teachers and other appropriate bodies.

I plan to make an announcement shortly on the draft legislation.

Pre-legislative scrutiny is ultimately a matter for the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills.

*Question No. 232 answered with Question No. 230.*

### **Teachers' Remuneration**

233. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether there is a clear pay disparity between teachers recruited before 1 January 2011 and those recruited thereafter; his views on whether it is unacceptable to maintain such pay disparities; his plans to address pay equality issues beyond the steps already agreed in regard to restoration of a qualification allowance payment; the cost of restoring teachers recruited since 1 January 2011 to the previous pay scale; the elements which make up this cost; and the number of teachers affected. [34769/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As a consequence of the financial crisis, there was a need to enact a number of measures to reduce public expenditure so as to stabilise the country's public finances. These included pay reductions and also reductions to the pay of new entrant public servants, including teachers, since 2011. Collective agreements reached between the Government and the public service unions provided vital industrial peace during this very difficult period for the State.

The Haddington Road/Lansdowne Road Agreement has allowed a programme of restoration to start. I have used this to negotiate substantial improvements in pay for new teachers. The agreement reached with TUI and INTO will see pay rises of between 15-22% (between €4600 and €6700) for new entrant teachers.

In education, there is a well-established increment system. Teachers are not paid equally. For example, the pay scale for teachers appointed prior to 2011 ranges from €32,009 to €60,155 depending on the date that the individual began teaching.

Part of the negotiation to date has secured a convergence of the scales of recruits at different periods. Any further negotiation on new entrant pay cannot focus on just one sector.

A broader assessment of pay and new entrant pay will be informed by the analysis of the Public Service Pay Commission.

### **School Admissions**

234. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has reviewed the recently published Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill of the Labour Party; his views on the aims and objectives of the Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34770/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I have included a specific action in the Action Plan for Education that expresses my commitment to working with the Committee to deliver change in this area.

As the Deputy is aware, the Government proposed and the Dáil agreed that the Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill would proceed to second stage in June 2017. This will allow parents, patrons and other stakeholders to have their say and to ensure that the right balance can be struck between competing rights and that there would be no unintended consequence that would create an adverse impact on the schools of minority denominations.

I believe that this Bill requires the time and space to allow for adequate scrutiny and debate in order to ensure that any new approach is reasonable, fair and workable.

The work of the Education and Skills Committee will be invaluable in that regard and I look forward to working with the Committee on this important work.

## Teachers' Remuneration

235. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he is planning to issue a directive on implementing pay deductions for members of teachers' unions that rejected working additional hours under the Croke Park agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34771/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** ASTI's withdrawal from the Croke Park hours means that the union has repudiated the Lansdowne Road Agreement.

Circular Letter 0045/2016 sets out the implications for ASTI members in opting to withdraw from the LRA. As detailed in the circular, ASTI members have opted to forego a series of benefits and protections including:

- Avoiding an increment freeze
- Inclusion of the S&S allowance of €1,592 into the pay scale
- Continued alleviation of the FEMPI Act pay reductions
- Application of the recent agreement with TUI and INTO on new entrant pay
- The Ward Report measures and a revised sequence for filling posts which enable fixed-term and part-time teachers to gain permanent, full-time jobs more easily and quickly than before
- An increase in the quantum of the Croke Park hours that can be worked on other than a whole-school basis
- A review of the usage of the Croke Park hours
- Protection against compulsory redundancy

In addition to the above, as ASTI members as are not covered by the LRA, they do not benefit from the recent agreement which my Department reached with INTO and TUI under the LRA, which substantially addresses the current difference in pay between those recruited since 2011 and those recruited since 2012.

## State Examinations Reviews

236. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the current status on the roll-out of junior cycle reform process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34772/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The curriculum and assessment arrangements for Junior Cycle are as set out in the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 and in the related subject specifications and syllabuses developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Implementation of the Framework is proceeding and the new subject specifications for Business Studies and Science, along with English, have now been introduced to schools. The teachers involved are benefitting from extensive continuing professional development and are availing of professional time to support implementation. In June 2017, English will be the first subject to be taken by students as part of the reformed Junior Cycle assessment arrangements.



Business Studies and Science will be examined under the new arrangements in June 2019.

Phase 3 of the Framework will begin implementation in September 2017, with the introduction of new subject specifications in Irish, Visual Arts and Modern Languages, covering French, German, Spanish and Italian. The new curriculum area of Well-being will also be introduced at that time.

Phase 4 will begin implementation in September 2018 with the introduction of Mathematics, Home Economics, History, Music and Geography, with the final phase 5 being implemented from September 2019. Phase 5 subjects will include Technology subjects, Religious Education, Jewish Studies and Classics.

Teachers of English who are members of ASTI have been directed by their union that, while they are to teach the new Junior Cycle subject specification, they are not to undertake Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) with their students. CBAs form a key element of the new Junior Cycle. Therefore, students who are taught by a teacher who is a member of the ASTI will not receive a grade for their CBAs and also since the written Assessment Task which is to be completed by students is linked to the second CBA, which is worth 10% of the marks for the final examination, these students cannot complete the Assessment Task, or gain marks for this examination component. Candidates for Junior Cycle English in 2017 who do not complete the assessment task can only be marked and graded based on a maximum of 90% of the available marks.

My Department requested the ASTI to provide an immediate derogation from their directive regarding the CBAs for current teachers of English in order that some current third year English students are no longer unfairly and unjustifiably disadvantaged. However, the ASTI did not accede to this request. My Department remains in contact with ASTI on these matters.

### **Skills Shortages**

237. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the areas that have been highlighted as having skills shortages by the skills and labour market research unit, SLMRU, such as business administration and management, the green economy, financial services, IT, manufacturing engineering, sales, marketing and transport; the way in which he plans to tackle these skills shortages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34773/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** My Department recently published the Action Plan for Education 2016 – 2019. The Plan provides a key statement on the reform agenda across education and training and contains a range of actions to be implemented with particular focus on disadvantage, skills, and continuous improvement within the education service

Key objectives of the Plan that address skills shortages are to: develop innovative responses to skills gaps across key priority areas of the economy; expand Apprenticeships and Traineeships; develop Regional Skills Plans to respond to local needs; expand Skillnets to reach more employers with new options for upgrading skills; reform the funding model for higher education to support Ireland's growth ambitions and the system's capacity to meet specific targets on skills gaps; and to increase the availability of quality entrepreneurship programmes and modules in schools and in higher and further education.

In addition, the National Skills Strategy which was launched by my Department earlier this year will provide a framework for skills development that will help drive Ireland's growth both

economically and societally over the next decade. Included in the actions is the creation of a new National Skills Council. The Council, when established shortly, will oversee research and advise on prioritisation and delivery of identified skills needs.

The SOLAS 2016 service plan sets out measures to address Further Education and Training (FET) skill needs in line with labour market and EGFSN forecasts. ETBs are currently reviewing existing provision for the purpose of matching capacity with potential demand for specific programmes e.g. apprenticeship, engineering, entrepreneurship and IT. This will also enable the realignment of course provision to meet identified skills shortages. Based on skills need forecasts, the 2016 FET service plan is making provision for almost 340,000 beneficiaries this year.

As well as mainstream provision in the higher education sector, Springboard+ 2016, which incorporates the ICT skills conversion programme, is providing almost 6,000 free higher education places for jobseekers who wish to upskill or reskill in areas where there are identified skills needs

Courses will be delivered in areas such as ICT, Manufacturing which includes the biopharma sector, Construction, Entrepreneurship, Cross-Enterprise Skills, the Hospitality Sector and International Financial Services.

### **After-School Support Services**

238. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the suggestions by the Irish National Teachers Organisation that related capital investment will be necessary if the programme for Government commitment on having schools available for child care services can be successfully implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34774/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** An interdepartmental working group has been established with officials from my Department and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to progress the key commitments in the Programme for a Partnership Government (May 2016), in order to improve the range and quality of options for Parents for after-school care for school-age children. My department has undertaken to consider how to facilitate the use of school buildings for this purpose.

As part of this work, the Group will consider and assess the following;

- Development of quality standards framework for after school provision
- Existing provision of after school care of school-age children
- Existing use of school buildings
- Capacity and demand for services
- Children's views on after-school care
- An appropriate quality and standards framework
- The development of criteria for the capital scheme to be funded by DCYA under Budget 2016
- Collaborative models with existing community/private service providers
- Potential funding incentives for provision of services

I expect to receive the group's report within the next few weeks. As part of my engagement with the education partners on how to facilitate the wider use of school buildings for the community, I discussed relevant issues with them at a round table before the Summer.

### **Disadvantaged Status**

239. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the stage the review of the school support programme through the DEIS, Delivering Equality of Opportunities in Schools initiative is at; when this review will be completed and published; if he envisages any changes to the funding or delivery model of the DEIS programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34776/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** It is my intention to publish a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion before the end of this year.

A process to review of the DEIS Programme which began last year is now nearing completion. The review is looking at all aspects of DEIS, including the range and impact of different elements of the DEIS School Support Programme, the potential for innovation within and between schools and its scope for increased integration of services provided by other Departments and Agencies, in order to improve effectiveness.

A new assessment framework is also being developed using centrally held CSO and DES data for the identification of new schools for inclusion. The number of schools to be included in the programme will be determined by this proposed new identification process which will assess all schools in the country.

Among the measures to be included in the plan are a series of pilot schemes aimed at introducing measures which have been shown to work well in improving results for disadvantaged children and students. The plan is expected to include targeted measures in the area of:

- School leadership
- School networks and clusters
- Teaching methodologies
- Integration of schools and other State supports within communities
- Greater use of Home School Community Liaison services

Implementation of actions arising from the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion will begin in the 2017/18 school year, and will be a continuing theme in our wider Annual Action Plan for Education.

Further information on the DEIS Review process is available on my Department's website at <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Review-Process-Information-Note.pdf>

### **School Curriculum**

240. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to provide new courses in the leaving certificate, such as coding, physical education and politics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34777/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department has committed to enriching teaching and learning with new curricula, in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019. This will contribute to delivering a “Step-Change” in the development of critical skills, knowledge and competences and providing the foundations for participation in work and society.

The roll-out of the new Leaving Certificate subject of Politics and Society has commenced in 41 schools from September 2016, following an open invitation to introduce this as an optional Leaving Certificate subject. Politics and Society aims to develop the student’s ability to be a reflective and active citizen, in a way that is informed by the insights and skills of social and political science. The introduction of the specification is part of my Department’s commemoration of 1916 and its commitment to education for sustainable development. The subject will be available to all schools from 2018.

The Government is committed to enhancing the availability of technology in schools through the introduction of ICT/Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate subject. As set out in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is conducting a scoping exercise in this regard. Informed by this research, the NCCA will work on development of a draft subject specification in 2017, with a view to implementation in schools in September 2019.

Physical Education is being developed by the NCCA as a full subject that can be assessed for the Leaving Certificate in a manner similar to other subjects. A specification for Leaving Certificate Physical Education is due to be finalised by the NCCA by the end of 2016. In addition, a Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework specification has recently been completed by the NCCA. The Framework will assist schools to design a P.E. programme for those students who may not choose to take P.E. as part of their Leaving Certificate examination. These developments are in keeping with the strong emphasis from my Department on promoting and encouraging Healthy Lifestyles for all students and commitments in the Programme for Partnership Government.

The Action Plan for Education also includes commitments to finalise and implement additional subject specifications at Leaving Certificate level as resources permit.

### **Educational Disadvantage**

241. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the new national action plan for educational inclusion will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34778/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** It is my intention to publish a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion before the end of this year.

A process to review of the DEIS Programme which began last year is now nearing completion. The review is looking at all aspects of DEIS, including the range and impact of different elements of the DEIS School Support Programme, the potential for innovation within and between schools and its scope for increased integration of services provided by other Departments and Agencies, in order to improve effectiveness.

A new assessment framework is also being developed using centrally held CSO and DES data for the identification of new schools for inclusion. The number of schools to be included in the programme will be determined by this proposed new identification process which will assess all schools in the country.

Among the measures to be included in the plan are a series of pilot schemes aimed at introducing measures which have been shown to work well in improving results for disadvantaged children and students. The plan is expected to include targeted measures in the area of:

- School leadership
- School networks and clusters
- Teaching methodologies
- Integration of schools and other State supports within communities
- Greater use of Home School Community Liaison services

Implementation of actions arising from the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion will begin in the 2017/18 school year, and will be a continuing theme in our wider Annual Action Plan for Education.

Further information on the DEIS Review process is available on my Department's website at <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Review-Process-Information-Note.pdf>

*Question No. 242 answered with Question No. 228.*

### **Teachers' Professional Development**

243. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the ways and total investment involved in which his Department supports teacher continuous professional development at primary and post-primary levels; if he will provide this figure as a percentage of education spending overall; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34780/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department will spend approximately €46m on teacher continuing professional development (CPD) in 2016 across the primary and post primary sectors. The teacher CPD budget represents 0.74% of my Departments overall budget for first and second level - almost 7% if salary and pension costs are excluded from the Department's budget.

The spend of €46m includes a) salary costs for support service personnel and b) substitution costs to facilitate teacher attendance at various CPD events and programmes.

The professional development needs of serving teachers in recent years have been addressed through the provision of an induction programme for newly qualified teachers, national in-service for new or revised curriculum areas including junior cycle and the new primary language curriculum and ongoing support for the curriculum generally with a particular focus on priority areas - literacy and numeracy, well-being, support for school leaders and for teachers to meet the needs of children with special educational needs.

The recently established Centre for School Leadership, a partnership between my Department, IPPN and PD, is intended to become a centre of excellence for school leaders. Its responsibilities cover the range of leadership development from pre-appointment training and induction of newly appointed principals, to CPD throughout leaders careers.

Other areas of expenditure include training for child protection, Board of Management training, a Teacher Fee Refund Scheme, Teacher Professional Networks and a number of post-



graduate programmes to meet particular identified needs such as the teaching of mathematics and special educational needs.

CPD is provided in a variety of ways, for example, through Department funded support services, who use a variety of formats including seminars, workshops, on-line and in-school support.

The Teaching Council, the professional body and regulator for teachers has published its policy, *Cosán*, on teacher learning and will continue to engage with stakeholders including teachers in preparation for commencement of section 39 of the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015 which will enable the Teaching Council to review and accredit programmes of continuing professional development.

*Question No. 244 answered with Question No. 230.*

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

245. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated timescale for and cost of the Government's programme commitment to reducing the pupil-teacher ratio in junior and senior infants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34782/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Budget 2016 provided for a one point improvement to the staffing allocation to primary schools, which has been implemented for the current school year.

The staffing schedule operates on a general average of 27 pupils to every 1 teacher (27:1) for the current school year. The ratio of 27:1 is an overall classroom teacher allocation ratio for the school and is not a reference to class size. The configuration of classes and the deployment of classroom teachers are done at local school level. Depending on the circumstances of the school, e.g. higher pupil numbers in certain classes, accommodation available, there may be a variation in the size of the classes in the school. School authorities are requested to ensure that the number of pupils in any one class is kept as low as possible, taking into account all of the above factors. The Department also requests school authorities to use their autonomy under the staffing schedule to implement smaller class sizes for junior classes.

Each 1 point adjustment to the staffing schedule is estimated to cost in the region of €15m-€18m per annum.

Budget 2017 sets out the resources available for schools for the 2017/18 school year. This Budget represents the start of a major reinvestment in education, and the first phase of implementation of the Action Plan for Education, aimed at becoming the best education system in Europe within a decade. The budget provides for over 2,400 additional teaching posts for our primary and post primary schools next year.

This includes additional teaching posts to meet demographic need, curriculum reform, additional resource teaching posts and the strengthening of school leadership.

The Programme for Government has a commitment to reduce class sizes at primary level and it is my intention to make further improvements to class sizes over the life of the Government.

### **School Patronage**



246. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the location of all schools under religious patronage which he expects to be divested in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34783/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** From 2013 to 2016, ten new schools have opened under the patronage divesting process. Details, including the location, of the two schools which opened in September 2016 are set out in the following table.

I consider the establishment of these ten schools as an initial but important step in giving parents confidence of the Department's intent about providing a plurality of education and a real choice for them in the type of primary school in their localities.

The Government is committed to progressing the development of a dynamic and innovative education system that reflects the diversity of twenty first century Ireland. The Programme for a Partnership Government reflects the Government's objective of strengthening parental choice and further expanding diversity in our school system, specifically by increasing the number of non-denominational and multi-denominational schools with a view to reaching 400 by 2030.

In addition to the phased transfer of Catholic schools to new patrons already under way, this requires considering new ideas and new approaches to substantially accelerate the changes in school provision in order to achieve greater diversity. I am progressing the patronage divesting/reconfiguration programme as a priority in this context. I plan to announce the new approaches which will be pursued in that regard within the timeframe indicated in the Action Plan for Education.

| Roll Number | Name           | Address                              | School           | Denomination         | Year |
|-------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|------|
| 20494Q      | Riverview ETNS | Limekiln Road, Greenhills, Dublin 12 | Educate Together | Multi denominational | 2016 |
| 20457K      | Castlebar ETNS | Castlebar, Co. Mayo                  | Educate Together | Multi denominational | 2016 |

*Question No. 247 answered with Question No. 229.*

### Postgraduate Enrolments

248. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the restoration of postgraduate grants and their necessity to open up access to postgraduate studies, ensure that a steady stream of persons achieve a postgraduate qualification for societal good and to ensure attractiveness to foreign investors. [34785/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Deputy will be aware of the Programme for Government commitment to increase financial supports for post graduate students with a particular focus on those from low income households.

In response to this commitment, I secured additional funding of €4million in Budget 2017 to facilitate the reinstatement of full maintenance grants, from September 2017, for the most disadvantaged post graduate students.

This will benefit approximately 1,100 of the most disadvantaged post graduate students who

meet the eligibility criteria for the special rate of maintenance grant, from September 2017, and it reverses the budgetary cut that was imposed on this cohort of students in 2012.

In addition to this specific measure targeted at postgraduate students, I also secured an additional €4.5million for other new access measures that will benefit target groups such as lone parents, travellers, mature students, and students with disabilities.

The new measures being introduced as a result of Budget 2017 will complement the existing student supports that are already in place for the 2016/17 academic year. This involves expenditure by my Department of more than €408 million on supports for approximately 80,000 disadvantaged students.

### **Teachers' Remuneration**

249. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for equating newly qualified teachers since 2011 and those that entered the workforce before; if he will report on discussions with the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland on the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34786/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As a consequence of the financial crisis, there was a need to enact a number of measures to reduce public expenditure so as to stabilise the country's public finances. These included pay reductions and also reductions to the pay of new entrant public servants, including teachers, since 2011. Collective agreements reached between the Government and the public service unions provided vital industrial peace during this very difficult period for the State.

The Haddington Road/Lansdowne Road Agreement has allowed a programme of restoration to start. I have used this to negotiate substantial improvements in pay for new teachers. The agreement reached with TUI and INTO will see pay rises of between 15-22% (between €4600 and €6700) for new entrant teachers.

In education, there is a well-established increment system. Teachers are not paid equally. For example, the pay scale for teachers appointed prior to 2011 ranges from €32,009 to €60,155 depending on the date that the individual began teaching.

Part of the negotiation to date has secured a convergence of the scales of recruits at different periods. Any further negotiation on new entrant pay cannot focus on just one sector.

A broader assessment of pay and new entrant pay will be informed by the analysis of the Public Service Pay Commission.

### **Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

250. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to improve access to special educational supports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34787/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Government is committed to ensuring that all children with special educational needs can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post-primary school network.

The policy of my Department is that children with special educational needs should be in-

cluded where possible and appropriate in mainstream placements with additional supports provided. In circumstances where children with special educational need require more specialised interventions, special school or special class places are also available.

Children, therefore, have a number of placement options including mainstream placement with support, placement in a special class in a mainstream school or placement in a special class in a special school. Such placements facilitate access to individualised education programmes, which may draw from a range of appropriate educational interventions delivered by fully qualified professional teachers with the support of special needs assistants and the appropriate school curriculum.

Funding for special education provision in 2016 will amount to some €1.5 billion, which is equivalent to over 17% of the gross overall current allocation for education and training and an increase of 10% in the past two years.

This funding provides for a range of supports and services including additional learning and resource teaching support, access to SNA support, special transport arrangements, building adaptations, enhanced capitation in special schools and special classes, specialised equipment, additional teacher training and the services of the National Educational Psychological Service.

This year, 12,900 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) are available for allocation to schools, to the end of 2016, which represents an increase of 23% over the numbers allocated in 2011.

There are currently over 12,400 learning support and Resource Teacher posts in mainstream primary and post primary schools.

The NCSE has allocated 7430 of 7,452 available resource teacher posts to schools for the 2016/17 school year. The allocation of 7430 posts for schools represents an increase of 41% in the number of resource teachers which have been allocated since the 2011/12 school year, at which point 5265 posts were allocated.

In addition, over 5000 learning support posts have been allocated to schools under the General Allocation Model for primary schools and Learning Support allocations for post primary schools.

Approximately 150 new Special Classes will be opened for the 2016/17 school year, which means there will be over 1,150 special classes in place, compared to 548 special classes in 2011.

125 special schools also provide specialist education for those pupils who need it.

As part the recent Budget announcements, an additional 115 SNA posts at an annual cost of €3.75m will be provided for allocation from January to June 2017 and an additional €18 million in 2017 to provide for around 900 additional resource teacher posts.

I also announced that following development and piloting over the past number of years, a new model for the allocation of teaching resources for children with special educational needs will be implemented from September 2017. Further details regarding implementation of the new model will be announced in the coming months.

The combination of supports provided means that school places are available for all children with special educational needs, regardless of their level of need.

The provision which is being made ensures that children with special educational needs can continue to participate in education and be supported in a manner appropriate to their needs. I can confirm that this Government will continue to ensure that the supports required to ensure

that all children with special educational needs can continue to participate in education will be provided.

There is still a long way to go and as committed to in the Programme for a Partnership Government, I plan to examine the adequacy of the present policies and provision, and their scope for improvement, particularly in relation to speech and language difficulties and early intervention.

### **Irish Sign Language**

251. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to improve access to Irish Sign Language courses for students with hearing disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34788/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** A new short course in Irish Sign Language (ISL) was developed by the Post-Primary Languages Initiative in the context of the new Framework for Junior Cycle. The course is currently being piloted in the Mid-West School for the Hearing Impaired in Limerick. Following this, the course will be ready to be implemented by schools opting to introduce ISL.

Short courses were introduced into the Junior Cycle curriculum as options for schools to develop and implement, according to the context of the individual school and the needs and interests of their students. The courses provide schools with greater flexibility in the delivery of their junior cycle programmes.

My Department will monitor the demand for and take-up of this course in Junior Cycle. There are no plans at present to expand ISL into the Leaving Certificate Established programme. However, there are four modules on Sign Language available as part of the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. The syllabus is available at <http://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Sign%20Language.pdf>.

### **Schools Building Projects Expenditure**

252. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria used by his Department for deciding on applications for capital funding of junior, senior and post-primary schools. [34789/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The delivery of school projects so that all schools in an area can between them cater for all students seeking a school place is the main focus of my Department capital budget. To this end, my Department uses a Geographical Information System to identify the areas under increased demographic pressure nationwide. The system uses a range of data sources in carrying out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level. The outcome of the latest demographic exercises was that in November 2015, 13 new schools were announced to open nationwide in 2017 and 2018.

The November 2015 announcement also detailed the new building projects and major extensions, including special schools, that will be progressed in areas where significant demographic need has been established. In addition, the 6 Year Programme (2016-21) prioritises projects that in addition to meeting increases in enrolments, have a major deficit of mainstream accommodation capacity for current enrolments, require major refurbishment and replacement

of poor accommodation. School projects that were announced under my Department's 5 Year Plan (2012-16) will also be advanced in the Capital Programme.

While all projects included in the Programme are based on the educational and demographic needs of the particular school and area, the decision of when exactly each individual school building project can proceed to tender and construction is based on a number of factors including the stage reached by the project in architectural planning, the level of overall funding available and the other contractual commitments and profiled expenditures extant under the Programme at that time.

The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for smaller scale projects for schools, where an immediate accommodation requirement has been identified, such as the appointment of an additional teacher. In that regard, it is open to schools to apply for funding for additional classroom accommodation, where required.

### **School Management**

253. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to end the current ban on promotions at the primary school level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34790/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Budget 2017 provides for the commencement of the restoration of middle management posts to lift the rigidity of the longstanding moratorium on these posts in both the primary and post-primary sector. A Department circular will issue in early January in relation to these new arrangements.

Strengthening leadership in schools is a serious issue and this announcement will provide additional resources to focus on leadership and management in our schools.

### **Legislative Process**

254. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the Technological Universities Bill; when it is to return to Dáil Éireann; the necessary changes he proposes to make to the draft legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34791/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy will be aware, the new Programme for Government outlines that this new Government will continue to support the creation of Technological Universities.

This is in line with the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 which provides a framework for the development of the higher education sector to 2030. With regard to the institute of technology sector, the Strategy recommended significant reforms to position the sector to meet national strategic objectives. In particular, the Strategy recommended consolidation within the sector and a pathway of evolution for those consolidated institutes of technology, to allow them to demonstrate significant progress against robust performance criteria and to apply to become technological universities.

Position of Technological Universities Bill:

The second Government Legislative Programme of this new Partnership Government was published on 27 September 2016, and the Technological Universities Bill is listed on the Dáil



Order Paper and is awaiting Committee Stage.

I recognise that there were a significant number of matters raised previously in respect of the Bill at both Committee and Report Stage. It is my intention to consult with all of the relevant stakeholders in relation to both the matters raised during the legislative process and the commitments contained in the Programme for Government.

Following the finalisation of this consultation process I will then advance the legislation having determined a position in relation to any matters raised as part of this consultation process.

### State Examinations Data

255. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the reported failure rate at leaving certificate maths; the measures his Department proposes to remedy this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34792/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I am taking it that the Deputy is referring to the combined numbers of Leaving Certificate Mathematics candidates at all three levels (Higher, Ordinary, and Foundation) who were awarded E grades, F grades or no grade in the 2016 examination. The designation of any performance in the certificate examinations as a 'fail' ceased in 1968.

The nature of curricular examinations such as the Leaving Certificate and the procedures currently in place for awarding grades are such that a certain amount of fluctuation in the grade distribution from year to year is to be expected. Grade distributions are also affected significantly by the proportion of candidates who opt to take the examination at each level. In particular, if the proportion of candidates opting for Higher level increases, the candidates making this move will tend to be those who were towards the higher-achieving end of the Ordinary level distribution and will tend to fall at the lower-achieving end of the Higher level distribution. This will obviously affect the grade distribution at both levels. Influenced by the combined effect of syllabus change in mathematics, known as Project Maths, and the introduction by the Higher Education Institutions of 'bonus points' for Higher level mathematics, the number of students in recent years presenting for Higher level in Leaving Certificate Mathematics examinations has increased significantly, from 15.8% in 2011 to 28% in 2016.

During the standard-setting process that happens as part of the marking process each year, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) takes account of these and any other relevant factors in the course of satisfying itself that the distribution of grades awarded is appropriate and that it accurately reflects the performance of the candidates in comparison to the achievement standards envisaged when the syllabus was designed.

In the context of a significant migration of mathematics candidates from Ordinary to Higher level, it may be noted that a similar absolute number of candidates awarded E, F or no grade at Ordinary level will inevitably be manifested as a higher percentage, since the total number of candidates at this level has reduced.

The number of candidates who failed to achieve at least a D3 grade at any level of the mathematics examination in 2016, while marginally higher than in the last three or four years, is very similar to the number in the years before that (2009 to 2011, for example). In the context of the factors mentioned above, there is nothing especially unusual about the grade distribution in mathematics for 2016.



In the case of the current syllabus change in mathematics, there has been a deliberate attempt to increase the emphasis on higher-order thinking skills, including interpretation, problem solving, and dealing with the unfamiliar. These are skills that students find difficult to master and teachers find difficult to instil in students. The syllabus expectations are ambitious at all levels.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) will be undertaking a review of the Project Maths initiative, now that the full implementation of all phases of the curricular change is complete. By this time students will have been through the new maths cycle a few times and the NCCA will have good information on which to base the assessment of its impact, especially on the learning of under-achievers. I have asked the State Examinations Commission to ensure that any lessons that can be learned from candidate performance in recent examinations, and the 2016 examination in particular, be fed into that review process. The Project Maths Implementation Support Group, an industry-education partnership set up by my Department, including third level bodies, Engineers Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, will also be able to provide their considered opinions to this process.

### **Institutes of Technology**

256. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the drop-out rate in third level institute of technology courses; the measures his Department propose to remedy the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34793/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In line with the overall mission of higher education in Ireland there has been a steady increase in student enrolments over recent years. The most recent report by the HEA on retention and progression, entitled 'A Study of Progression in Higher Education 2012/13 TO 2013/14', is available on the HEA website, [www.heai.ie](http://www.heai.ie). This is the fourth in a series of progression analysis released by the HEA and examines those 1st year undergraduate new entrants enrolled in the academic year 2012/13 and traces them to the following academic year 2013/14. The report gives an in-depth analysis of the non-progression rates by NFQ level, sector, discipline, gender, age, nationality and socio-economic group. There are many factors identified as influencing the likelihood of progression such as gender, age at commencement, prior educational attainment, nationality and socio-economic grouping.

The report shows that 84% of full-time undergraduate new entrants in 2012/13 progressed to their second year of study in 2013/14. The report demonstrates that the overall new entrant non-progression rate was 15% in 2007/08 and has remained constant at 16% from 2010/11 to 2012/13.

The rates of non-progression in 2012/13 varied within and between sectors ranging from 26% and 28% at levels 6 and 7 to 17%, 11% and 6% at level 8 in universities, institutes of technology and colleges respectively. Further work will be done to see how students can best be supported to continue on their course or transfer to another programme.

The HEA through the System Performance and Strategic Dialogue process also monitor progression rates within the institutions on an annual basis. Institutes report on retention measures in place within their institutes to combat high non-progression rates. The HEA funds retention initiatives in Computer Science disciplines in higher education institutions through the Information Technology Investment Fund. In 2015 these initiatives included additional classes, attendance mentoring, teaching and learning initiatives, student support sessions, buddy practical's and maths enabling courses. In 2016 the National Forum for Teaching and Learning established an ICT Retention Scoping Group to examine ways in which students could be enabled to

complete ICT courses. The group working with practitioners and industry are examining areas such as career guidance, pathways, provision and pedagogy.

One of the key objectives of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 ('National Access Plan') is to address the issue of non-completion within higher education institutions, for those in under-represented target groups. The Plan also commits to the further development of mechanisms to track the progression, retention and student experience of target groups. The target student groups include entrants from socio-economic groups that have low participation in higher education; first time mature student entrants and students with disabilities.

To support the implementation of these objectives, a Working Group is being established to consider the issues contributing to the non-completion of target groups in the National Access Plan and to produce recommendations for policy and practice. The group is being convened by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and will include representatives of relevant stakeholders. Considerations of members will be informed by recent, qualitative research by the National Forum for Teaching and Learning on the reasons why students leave higher education (National Forum for Teaching and Learning, 2015).

### **Apprenticeship Data**

257. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the lack of apprenticeships suitable for a number of employment vacancies, such as chefs and in the hospitality sector generally, to upskill young unemployed workers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34794/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Apprenticeship Council was established in early 2014 to oversee the expansion of the apprenticeship system into a range of new areas. Its first task was to formally invite proposals for new apprenticeship programmes from consortia of enterprise, professional bodies and education and training providers. Over 80 separate proposals were received all of which were evaluated by the Council. Following the evaluation process, the Council prioritised 25 proposals for development. Included in these proposals are a number of proposals in the hospitality sector, particularly in the culinary area.

Work is progressing on the development of a new Commis Chef Apprenticeship through the Apprenticeship Council and it is envisaged that this programme will commence in 2017. A separate proposal to develop a Chef de Partie Apprenticeship was recently approved development funding by the Apprenticeship Council. The Council will continue to work closely with these consortia to develop their proposals into sustainable apprenticeships that can be delivered on a nationwide basis.

### **Apprenticeship Data**

258. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the uptake in the number of apprenticeships by females; if his Department has proposals to address the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34795/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** As the Deputy is aware, in order to be registered as an apprentice by SOLAS, a person must be employed by an approved employer in one of the 27 craft trades. Recruitment to apprenticeship

is therefore driven by employers rather than by SOLAS or by education and training providers.

The 2014 Review of Apprenticeship in Ireland acknowledged that the number of women employed in craft apprenticeships is low as they operate in sectors that have traditionally low levels of female employment. SOLAS offers a bursary to employers to encourage women to take up apprenticeships in these areas. Despite this the number of female apprentices remains low.

Currently the Apprenticeship Council is overseeing the expansion of the apprenticeship system into a range of new areas, following a call for proposals from employers and education and training providers. 25 proposals have been prioritised by the Council for development. In recent months, we have seen the first of these new apprenticeships with the new Insurance Practitioner Apprenticeship launching in September and the Industrial Electrical Engineer Apprenticeship recently commencing. Further new apprenticeships will get underway later this year and early next year. Many of these new programmes are in sectors where there is a different gender balance in the workplace and I am confident that this will lead to a strong increase in female participation when these new apprenticeships are launched in the coming months.

Accompanying the renewal and expansion of apprenticeship in Ireland will be a new branding and marketing campaign. SOLAS will examine how this campaign can assist with promoting apprenticeship to women and to their potential employers.

*Question No. 259 answered with Question No. 223.*

### Third Level Admissions Data

260. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of those who have entered third level education over each of the past ten years in each socio-economic group, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34807/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Since 2007 data on the socio-economic group (SEG) background of entrants to higher education is collected annually by the HEA via the “Equal Access Survey”.

This is a voluntary survey which collects information on the social and economic background of new students who enter higher education for the first time. The survey is administered by each higher education institution as part of the student registration process.

It is important to note that as the survey is voluntary, response rates vary from year to year, and by institution.

The following table provides a breakdown of the numbers who have entered third level education and completed the survey from the inception of the survey in 2007, broken down by socio-economic group.

| Year      | Number of FT NE, Prog Type 10,11,12,13, Year 1 | Response Rate as % of all NE | Employers and Managers A | Higher Professional B | Lower Professional C | Non-manual D | Manual skilled E | Semi-skilled F | Unskilled G | Own account workers H | Farmers I | Agricultural workers J | All others gainfully occupied, and unknown Z |
|-----------|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------------------|--|
| 2015/2016 | 42,530   | 70.3%                        | 4,703                    | 2,959                 | 2,350                | 2,672        | 2,739            | 1,469          | 1,231       | 1,831                 | 1,758     | 104                    | 5,255  |
| 2015/2016 |  |                              | 17%                      | 11%                   | 9%                   | 10%          | 10%              | 5%             | 5%          | 7%                    | 6%        | 0%                     | 19%  |
| 2014/2015 | 41,348   | 75.7%                        | 4,749                    | 3,008                 | 2,412                | 2,796        | 2,797            | 1,479          | 1,307       | 2,069                 | 1,905     | 115                    | 5,409  |
| 2014/2015 |  |                              | 17%                      | 11%                   | 9%                   | 10%          | 10%              | 5%             | 5%          | 7%                    | 7%        | 0%                     | 19%  |
| 2013/2014 | 40,346   | 73.7%                        | 4,579                    | 2,759                 | 2,263                | 2,571        | 2,680            | 1,437          | 1,203       | 1,959                 | 1,820     | 96                     | 5,312  |

| Year      | Number of FT NE, Prog Type 10,11,12,13, Year 1 | Response Rate as % of all NE | Employers and Managers A | Higher Professional B | Lower Professional C | Non-manual D | Manual skilled E | Semi-skilled F | Unskilled G | Own account workers H | Farmers I | Agricultural workers J | All others gainfully occupied, and unknown Z |
|-----------|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------------------|--|
| 2013/2014 |  |                              | 17%                      | 10%                   | 8%                   | 10%          | 10%              | 5%             | 5%          | 7%                    | 7%        | 0%                     | 20%  |
| 2012/2013 | 40,038   | 91.3%                        | 4,579                    | 2,903                 | 2,222                | 2,380        | 2,890            | 1,394          | 628         | 2,056                 | 1,953     | 215                    | 4,346  |
| 2012/2013 |  |                              | 18%                      | 11%                   | 9%                   | 9%           | 11%              | 5%             | 2%          | 8%                    | 8%        | 1%                     | 17%  |
| 2011/2012 | 39,627   | 91.0%                        | 4,560                    | 2,642                 | 2,241                | 2,242        | 2,868            | 1,315          | 567         | 2,023                 | 1,831     | 202                    | 3,627  |
| 2011/2012 |  |                              | 19%                      | 11%                   | 9%                   | 9%           | 12%              | 5%             | 2%          | 8%                    | 8%        | 1%                     | 15%  |
| 2010/2011 | 39,313   | 86.4%                        | 4,699                    | 2,809                 | 2,319                | 2,542        | 3,170            | 1,390          | 644         | 2,002                 | 2,069     | 209                    | 4,400  |
| 2010/2011 |  |                              | 18%                      | 11%                   | 9%                   | 10%          | 12%              | 5%             | 2%          | 8%                    | 8%        | 1%                     | 17%  |
| 2009/2010 | 39,673   | 87.2%                        | 5,192                    | 2,931                 | 2,659                | 2,739        | 3,456            | 1,482          | 814         | 2,160                 | 2,379     | 162                    | 4,665  |
| 2009/2010 |  |                              | 18%                      | 10%                   | 9%                   | 10%          | 12%              | 5%             | 3%          | 8%                    | 8%        | 1%                     | 16%  |
| 2008/2009 | 37,229   | 72.5%                        | 4,637                    | 2,205                 | 2,215                | 2,235        | 3,025            | 1,558          | 946         | 1,754                 | 2,123     | 125                    | 2,817  |
| 2008/2009 |  |                              | 20%                      | 9%                    | 9%                   | 9%           | 13%              | 7%             | 4%          | 7%                    | 9%        | 1%                     | 12%  |
| 2007/2008 | 34,580   | 65.0%                        | 3,663                    | 1,735                 | 1,827                | 2,053        | 2,572            | 1,285          | 788         | 1,176                 | 1,746     | 96                     | 2,170  |
|           |  |                              | 19%                      | 9%                    | 10%                  | 11%          | 13%              | 7%             | 4%          | 6%                    | 9%        | 1%                     | 11%  |

\* Includes Non-EU fee paying students

\*Excludes Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI) & National College of Ireland (NCI)

FT Full time

NE New Entrants

### Special Educational Needs Service Provision

261. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reasons a person (details supplied) has been refused administrative status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34815/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) which is an independent agency, is responsible, through its network of Special Needs Organisers for determining the appropriate staffing levels in Special schools. The NCSE operates within my Department's policy in allocating this support.

Circular 0042/2011 provides information to schools regarding the staffing arrangements which apply in Special schools. The Circular sets out that special schools are staffed based on their pupil profiles and the disability category of the pupils enrolled, as opposed to being based principally on school designation. Staffing levels therefore reflect the complexity of needs that exist within schools rather than being determined solely by a school's designation, in recognition that many Special schools enrol students from disability categories other than from those provided for by their school designations.

In determining the staffing allocation for schools, the NCSE takes into account up-to-date enrolment and pupil profile information. School staffing schedules are reviewed and updated each year by the NCSE. As such, the profile of Special school pupil populations are aligned with appropriate staffing allocations.

Staffing arrangements for special schools are in line with policy advice provided by the NCSE, which did not recommend alteration to staffing ratios established under the Report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC).

In addition, as outlined in the SERC Report, administrative principals should be recognised in all special schools at the point at which the sixth teacher (i.e. the fifth assistant teacher) is

about to be appointed.

There are no plans to deviate from these arrangements for special schools that do not meet the criteria set out above.

The school to which the Deputy refers, having a staffing of 1 principal and 3 assistant teachers, is not eligible for an administrative principal post at this point in time as the school does not meet the qualifying criteria.

I am aware of the workload and the pressures on teaching Principals. In this regard, my Department has provided release days for teaching principals to assist them in fulfilling their Principal duties. Circular 25/02 which is available on my Department's website outlines the number of days that teaching principals may take as release time in a school year. Under these arrangements my Department pays for a substitute teacher to be employed by a school to facilitate administrative functions to be undertaken by the teaching principal. Under the current arrangements the number of days that principal teachers may take as release time in each school year ranges between 14 and 22 days depending on the size of the school. My Department provides capitation funding to all recognised primary schools. The amount of grant paid to an individual primary school for capitation and ancillary services is determined by the school's enrolment, subject to a minimum grant for both capitation and ancillary services in respect of schools with enrolments up to 60, and a maximum ancillary services grant in the case of schools with enrolments of 500 or more.

Boards of Management have autonomy on how they use and prioritise that funding to meet their day to day running costs including for the provision of secretarial services, to assist with school administration.

The detailed arrangements are set out in Circular 0076/2015 that was published in December 2015 on my Departments website.

### **Third Level Staff**

262. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps taken by his Department to implement the recommendations of the Cush report; the number of academic staff with more than two years' service who have been given permanent and pensionable contracts since 2009 and the grade of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34818/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Report of the Chair of the Expert Group on Fixed Term and Part-Time issues in Lecturing in Ireland was published in July 2016 and the Report contains a number of recommendations that will assist in addressing concerns raised about the level of part-time and fixed-term employment in lecturing in the third level sector. My Department issued directions to the sector to implement the recommendations contained in the report in accordance with the terms of the Lansdowne Road Agreement and my understanding is that the Institutions are taking steps to do so.

My Department does not hold or collect data in relation to the number of staff who have had permanent and pensionable contracts provided to them since 2009 or other information relating to grades.

### **School Costs**



263. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action he will take to address the disparity in school costs which exist from school to school here and the inequality faced by parents by providing funding for a free primary education system as costed by a charity (details supplied). [34897/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I am aware of the report referred to by the Deputy.

I strongly support any measures that can be put in place to reduce costs for parents.

All schools must be sensitive to the financial pressures on parents in making decisions, not just about school uniforms or books, but about any matter that has cost implications for parents.

The Action Plan for Education outlines hundreds of actions to be implemented over the 3 year period 2016 to 2019. Some of the actions as part of the plan are to strengthen the focus on reducing school costs for parents by:

- restoring capitation funding over a three-year period as resources permit
- Increasing the financial support for book rental schemes, in order to reduce or eliminate school book costs for parents
- Issuing a new circular to school authorities and ETBs regarding school uniform policy and other costs and the need to put a greater emphasis on reducing the cost of school uniforms and other costs.

Budget 2017 represents the start of a major programme of reinvestment in education, and the first phase of implementation of the Action Plan for Education, aimed at becoming the best education system in Europe within a decade.

It was not possible to provide additional funding in Budget 2017 in relation to this element of the Action Plan due to the many competing demands for the available funding. However, this commitment remains a priority for me to address as soon as possible during the lifetime of the Action Plan. It is important to note that the total allocation to this Department for additional policy measures, after demographics and Industrial Relations commitments, was €130 million and of which all our commitments in higher and further education and primary and secondary schools had to be funded.

My Department's position in relation to voluntary contributions is that they are permissible provided it is made absolutely clear to parents that there is no question of compulsion to pay. I have no plans to alter this position so long as schools ensure that the contributions are sought in a manner that makes this clear to all concerned.

Separately, the Deputy will be aware that the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill, which was published on 6th July 2016, contains a provision prohibiting the charging of fees or seeking payment or contributions for an application for admission to a school or for the enrolment or continued enrolment of a student in a school.

I also intend to introduce a stronger complaints procedure and a charter for parents. It is important that schools should consult parents on matters relating to their children's education, including those matters which have cost implications, and schools should be responsive to the views and concerns of parents. In that regard requiring schools to have a parent charter will ensure that schools will interact better with parent associations and with individual parents.

I plan to make an announcement shortly on draft legislation that will replace Section 28 of



the Education Act, 1998 and require every school to publish and operate a Parent and Student Charter in accordance with national guidelines. These guidelines will be published after consultation with the education partners.

I believe that these actions will significantly strengthen the focus on reducing school costs for parents.

*Question No. 264 answered with Question No. 212.*

### **Summer Works Scheme Applications**

265. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will make the necessary funding available to a school (details supplied) to carry out construction works for bus and car parking facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34910/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is in receipt of a Category 10 application for external environment works, under the Summer Works Scheme (SWS) (2016-2017) from the school to which he refers. Valid SWS (2016-2017) applications from schools in respect of Categories 3 to 10 that were not reached under round one approvals announced on 28th April last, will, subject to the overall availability of funding, qualify to be assessed under future rounds of the Scheme. If this arises, the terms and conditions of the scheme as outlined in Circular Letter (0055/2015), which may be accessed on my Department's website, will continue to apply when allocating funding to such projects. The application from the school in question is available to be considered in this context.

### **Student Grant Scheme Eligibility**

266. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there is any form of funding available to assist a programme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34914/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The main support available to students is the statutory based Student Grants Scheme. To qualify for grant support, a student has to meet various criteria such as means, residency, nationality and progression.

Article 15 of the Student Grant Scheme 2016 states that where a student is required as part of an approved undergraduate or postgraduate course to attend a higher education institution outside the State for a period of up to one year, a maintenance grant may continue to be paid where the period abroad does not extend the normal duration of the approved course. Furthermore, a maintenance grant may continue to be paid, where a student is required to participate in an off-campus placement as a compulsory part of his/her course, as long as the off-campus placement does not extend the normal duration of the course.

### **SOLAS Training and Education Programmes Data**

267. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of young persons under 25 years of age who commenced a VTOS course in 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34929/16]

268. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the current number of young persons under 25 years of age on a VTOS course; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34930/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 267 and 268 together

I am advised by SOLAS that the number of young persons aged under 25 who enrolled on VTOS courses in 2015 was 827. The scheme was introduced in 1989 and was designed specifically to provide for the needs of those who are long-term unemployed with minimal or no qualifications to facilitate their return to education and training. An evaluation of the VTOS programme will commence in 2017 as part of the series of programme evaluations set out the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019.

### **SOLAS Training and Education Programmes Allowances**

269. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the new training rates of €193 per week for young persons under 26 years of age announced in budget 2017 will commence and be paid to recipients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34931/16]

270. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the new training rates of €193 per week for young persons under 26 years of age will apply to all persons on the various training programmes, irrespective of when they commenced the programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34932/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 269 and 270 together.

The training allowances, funded by my Department through SOLAS, paid to participants on Further Education and Training courses are based on Department of Social Protection payment rates. The increase to €193 per week for jobseekers aged under 26, announced in Budget 2017, will be paid from September 2017 to all eligible participants on Further Education and Training courses in line with the Department of Social Protection Back to Education Allowance increase.

Participants means are taken into account in deciding the level of payment to those in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance and this will also apply to participants on Further Education and Training courses.

### **Minor Works Scheme**

271. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department is issuing minor work grants to primary schools in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35119/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department is currently determining the likely end-year position on capital expenditure 2016 and I expect to be able to make an announcement regarding the Minor Works Grant 2016/2017 before the end of the week.

## **Student Grant Scheme Eligibility**

272. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria to be eligible for grant funding under the SUSI application based on stamp 4 on a student's GNIB card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35137/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Under the terms of the student grant scheme, grant assistance is awarded to students who meet the prescribed conditions of funding including those which relate to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment and means. The nationality requirements for the student grant scheme are set out in section 14 of the Student Support Act 2011 and regulation 5 of the Student Support Regulations 2016. To qualify for a student grant, it is the candidate's nationality or his/her immigration status in the State that determines whether or not he/she meets the nationality requirement outlined in the Act and Regulations. Possession of a 'stamp 4' does not automatically satisfy the nationality requirement of the student grant legislation.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform adjudicates on a person's entitlement to remain in the State and on the stamp that is awarded where permission to remain is sanctioned. I understand a 'stamp 4' can be awarded to categories of applicants other than those specified in the Student Support Act and the Student Support Regulations.

Article 32 of the Student Grant Scheme 2016 provides for a review of eligibility for the award of a grant in the event of a change of circumstances in the academic year, including a change in relation to a student's nationality or immigration status. Where a student acquires Irish citizenship by naturalisation, or is granted one of the permission to remain criterion provided for in the Act or Regulations during the course of their studies, he/she may apply to SUSI to have his/her application re-assessed.

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

## **Schools Refurbishment**

273. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will make funding available to a school (details supplied) to allow it to install a lift, a ramp, a wheelchair-friendly entrance and an additional wheelchair-friendly toilet in order that the college can be easily accessed by the disabled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35140/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department's Planning and Building Unit has no record of receiving an application for funding from the school to which the Deputy refers. If such an application is received it will be fully considered and a decision will issue directly to the school authority.

## **Special Educational Needs Staff**

274. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of whole-time equivalent special needs assistants and resource teachers employed in schools in the years 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016 respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35160/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The provision for children with Special Educational Needs has been prioritised in recent years, despite the enormous pressures on all public spending.

Funding for special education provision in 2016 will amount to some €1.5 billion, which is equivalent to approximately 17% of the gross overall current allocation for education and training; an increase of 10% in the past two years.

This funding provides for a range of supports and services to ensure that wherever a child is enrolled, s/he will have access to an appropriate education and has ensured that the number of resource teachers and SNAs being allocated to schools has risen very significantly in recent years.

In 2004 there were 5,869 SNA posts allocated to schools, 10,442 posts at the end of 2008, and 10,487 posts in 2012. 12,900 SNA posts are currently available to the NCSE to allocate to schools to the end of 2016, of which 12,838 SNA posts are currently allocated to schools.

The number of resource teaching posts allocated to schools annually by the NCSE has also increased significantly in recent years. In 2004, surplus allocations in schools were used to provide for resource teaching allocations. Only where no surplus existed in schools was additional provision made. A figure for the number of resource teacher posts allocated to schools in 2004 is therefore not available. In 2008, approximately 4800 resource teacher posts were allocated to schools by the NCSE, while in 2012, 5265 posts were allocated. For the 2016/17 school year, 7452 resource teacher posts are available to the NCSE to allocate to schools, of which 7430 posts are currently allocated.

We now have the highest level of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support and Resource Teaching allocations which we have ever had and which will ensure that children with special educational needs can continue to participate in education and be supported in a manner appropriate to their needs.

### **Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Scheme**

275. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he expects the review of DEIS to be completed; if consideration is being given to incorporating new programmes, either on a pilot or mainstream basis, that have been shown to be effective for children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35162/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** It is my intention to publish a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion before the end of this year.

A process to review the DEIS Programme which began last year is now nearing completion. The review is looking at all aspects of DEIS, including the range and impact of different elements of the DEIS School Support Programme, the potential for innovation within and between schools and its scope for increased integration of services provided by other Departments and Agencies, in order to improve effectiveness.

Among the measures to be included in the plan are a series of pilot schemes aimed at introducing measures which have been shown to work well in improving results for disadvantaged children and students. The plan is expected to include targeted initiatives in the areas of:

- School leadership

- School networks and clusters
- Teaching methodologies
- Integration of schools and other State supports within communities
- Greater use of Home School Community Liaison services

Implementation of actions arising from the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion will begin in the 2017/18 school year, and will be a continuing theme in our wider Annual Action Plan for Education.

Further information on the DEIS Review process is available on my Department's website at <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Review-Process-Information-Note.pdf>.

### **School Admissions**

276. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he plans a referendum on the issue of equal access to schools. [28714/16]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I have included a specific action in the Action Plan for Education that expresses my commitment to working with the Committee to deliver change in this area.

As the Deputy is aware, the Government proposed and the Dáil agreed that the Equal Status (Admissions to Schools) Bill proceed to second stage in June 2017. This will allow parents, patrons and other stakeholders to have their say and to ensure that the right balance can be struck between competing rights and that there would be no unintended consequence that would create an adverse impact on the schools of minority denominations.

I believe that this matter requires the time and space to allow for adequate scrutiny and debate in order to ensure that any new approach is reasonable, fair and workable.

The work of the Education and Skills Committee will be invaluable in that regard and I look forward to working with the Committee on this important work.

### **Motor Tax**

277. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will ensure stipulation number 6 on the official form for taxing a horsebox will be amended to address a matter (details supplied). [34436/16]

287. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will include bloodstock owners and breeders who may not have a herd number as a group on the commercial tax listing of vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34668/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 277 and 287 together.

To be taxed as a commercial vehicle, a vehicle must be constructed as a goods vehicle and must be used solely in the course of trade or business. Licensing authorities have an obligation

under Article 3 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 to be satisfied that a vehicle is correctly taxed and it is thus open to a motor tax office to seek appropriate documentation supporting a claim for the commercial rate of motor tax. Such documentation may include a certificate of commercial insurance, evidence of registration for VAT or, at the discretion of the licensing authority concerned, any other appropriate documentation that would indicate that the applicant is in trade or business. It is up to the individual concerned to provide whatever evidence is required by the licensing authority in order for it to be satisfied that the applicant is entitled to claim what is in effect a concessionary rate of tax.

### **Motor Tax**

278. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will advise on a motor tax issue for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34440/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Non-Use of Motor Vehicles Act 2013 came into effect on 1 July 2013. The primary purpose of the Act is to replace the system whereby a vehicle was declared off the road retrospectively with a system under which the vehicle must be declared off the road in advance. The system of making retrospective declarations had become a means of evasion of motor tax estimated to have cost some €50m annually.

The Act provides that a vehicle can be declared off the road for a minimum period of three months and a maximum period of twelve months. Where the owner of a vehicle wishes to make a declaration of non-use, he or she must do so during the final month of an existing tax disc or a previously made declaration of non-use. The declaration can be made on-line at [www.motortax.ie](http://www.motortax.ie) or through the local motor tax office. The National Vehicle and Driver File, under the auspices of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, issues renewal notices at the beginning of the final month of tax or a previously made declaration of non-use to remind motorists that the vehicle must be taxed or declared off the road for a further period.

Where a declaration of non-use is not made in the final month of a tax disc or previously made declaration of non-use, a vehicle must be taxed for the minimum period provided for in motor tax legislation for the category of vehicle concerned. A new declaration can then be made at any stage during the final month of the new motor tax disc if the vehicle is thereafter not going to be in use in a public place.

These arrangements were well publicised at the time of introduction of the legislation.

The legislation does not provide for exemptions from the foregoing requirements. This is to protect the revised arrangements; allowing an owner to declare a vehicle off the road after the expiry of a current declaration of non-use could potentially be a move back to the system of retrospective declarations, thereby undermining the overall objective of the legislative change.

### **Control of Dogs**

279. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if Wicklow County Council has an obligation to put the Wicklow dog pound contract with ISPCA out to tender; the standards and protocols that apply to the operation of the dog pound system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34413/16]



**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Under the Control of Dogs Acts, local authorities have responsibility for operating and managing dog control and licensing services in their administrative areas, including the management of dog pounds or shelters and my Department has no involvement in this process. In this regard, section 15(2) of the 1986 Act empowers local authorities to enter into arrangements with any person for the provision and maintenance of dog pounds or shelters and for the exercise by any such persons of the functions of the local authority under the Act in respect of the acceptance, detention, disposal and destruction of stray or unwanted dogs.

Furthermore, section 15(3) of the 1986 Act empowers local authorities to enter into arrangements with any other local authority, or with the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ISPCA), or with a person connected with animal welfare, for the exercise of all or any of its functions, other than its functions under section 17 or *Section 30* of this Act.

The procurement of any service in that regard, therefore, is a matter for each local authority and the management and operation of such pounds or shelters are matters solely for the relevant local authority.

Moreover, the enforcement of welfare standards regarding all animals, including the welfare of dogs in pounds or shelters, is a matter for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013, and one in which my Department has no direct role.

### **Insurance Costs**

280. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views regarding the fact that insurance companies are stating that they will not insure properties post pyrite remediation; the steps he proposes to take to address this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34442/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** At the outset, neither my Department nor the Pyrite Resolution Board has been made aware of any properties remediated under the pyrite remediation scheme, which have been declined insurance cover post completion of remediation works. While I am acutely aware of the upset and distress faced by many homeowners who have been affected by pyritic heave, my Department has no function in relation to the regulation or oversight of insurance providers or insurance based products ; these are matters for the Minister for Finance and the Central Bank of Ireland.

The provision of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered are commercial matters for insurance companies and their decisions are based on the completion of assessments by such insurers of the risks involved. Ultimately, these matters are considered by insurers on a case-by-case basis and neither the Minister for Finance nor the Central Bank can direct insurers to provide home insurance cover to specific individuals.

However, my Department understands that Insurance Ireland, which is the representative body for insurance companies in Ireland, operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to obtaining insurance. Their service can be contacted at Tel: (01) 676 1914 or by email at [iis@insuranceireland.eu](mailto:iis@insuranceireland.eu).

### **Social and Affordable Housing Provision**

281. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will provide information on a proposed development (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34482/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Longford County Council recently advertised for proposals to deliver social housing in their administrative area. As with all such publicly advertised processes and in line with public procurement arrangements, the local authority has undertaken an assessment of the proposals received and has proposed the advancement of a particular project for social housing delivery. A decision on this project proposal will issue from my Department to the local authority imminently.

### **Housing Agency Portfolio**

282. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if his Department has provided funding to the Housing Agency to buy portfolios of vacant properties for sale and leasing to local authorities; and the status of the implementation of these proposals for reducing the vacant rate of residential dwellings. [34496/16]

355. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 5.6 to directly fund the housing agency with €70 million to acquire suitable portfolios of vacant properties for social housing; the number of units of accommodation that have been acquired under this action to date; the number that will be acquired by year end and in the first two quarters of 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35105/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 282 and 355 together.

With the demand for additional social housing units to be delivered at an accelerated pace, initiatives which provide greater efficiency in the delivery of those units are vital. In particular, engaging with banks and investment companies in respect of their vacant/available property portfolios, which normally span a number of local authority jurisdictions, benefits from a national approach. In that context, the Housing Agency currently acts as a central co-ordination body at national level for banks/investors to interact with. This activity began in early 2015 and to date has yielded 174 properties across 29 local authorities at a total value of over €25m.

In a further development of this activity, a new acquisitions initiative was provided for in Rebuilding Ireland (Action 5.6), under which the Housing Agency is to be provided directly with capital funding with the specific focus of engaging with banks and investment companies to acquire properties for social housing nationally, thereby increasing social housing delivery. Under this acquisitions programme, the Agency will use a rotating fund of €70m to acquire vacant properties from banks and private equity investment funds in areas with high levels of social housing demand. In doing this, the Agency will work in close consultation with local authorities to ensure that suitable properties are only purchased in areas where there is a demand for social housing. It is estimated that this mechanism, implementation of which is already underway, will deliver some 1,600 units over the period to 2020. Details of the progress under this initiative will be outlined in future Rebuilding Ireland quarterly progress reports.

In respect of dealing with vacant dwellings generally, Action 5.1 of Rebuilding Ireland undertakes to develop a National Vacant Housing Re-Use Strategy by early 2017. To this end, the

Housing Agency, which has lead responsibility for co-ordinating the development of the Strategy, has established a working group to inform the Strategy, with senior representatives from my Department, local authorities and from the Housing Agency itself. It has met twice so far. A number of local authorities have commenced, or are planning to commence, pilot programmes to identify vacant homes and bring them back into use; these pilot programmes will inform the Strategy. In addition, the Strategy will be informed by international best practice and experience, and research is being undertaken in this area.

### **Non-Principal Private Residence Charge Data**

283. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the liability due by persons who have not paid the non-principal private residence charge to date; the amount due for each year since it was introduced in 2009; the amounts due in respect of each year and the amount increased as a result of non-payment adding up to a figure of €7,230 which may be due in these cases; if the figure will increase in the future; the number of cases in which fines of this nature are due to be collected; if this is being followed up; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34548/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009, as amended, provides the legislative basis for the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge. The NPPR Charge, which has since been discontinued, applied in the years 2009 to 2013 to any residential property in which the owner did not reside as their normal place of residence. The self-assessed charge is set at €200 per annum and liability for it falls, in the main, on owners of rental, holiday and vacant properties. It is a matter for an owner, whether resident in Ireland or elsewhere, to determine if he or she has a liability and, if so, to declare that liability and pay the Charge and any late payment fees applicable. Under the Act, it is a function of a local authority to collect Non-Principal Private Residence Charges, and late payment fees due to it and all Charges and late payment fees imposed and payable to a local authority are under the care and management of the local authority concerned.

Approximately 385,000 properties have been registered for the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge, which has raised in excess of €544m to date over its five years of operation. Proceeds from the charge are retained by local authorities and are used for the provision of local services. It is not possible to state with certainty the level of non-compliance with the Charge. In 2016, to date, approximately €30m has been collected by local authorities in charges relating to the period 2009-2013.

### **Housing Adaptation Grant**

284. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans to increase the upper level of the housing adaptation grant from €30,000; his further plans to review the means testing system for this grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34628/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I have no plans currently to increase the upper limit of the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability from € 30,000. The average grant paid out under this scheme in 2015 was €8,000 per applicant and I believe it is important to spread the benefit of the scheme to as many recipients as possible within the funding available.

Changes to the means assessment for this scheme were introduced following a 2013 review. I have no proposals to further review the means assessment for the scheme at this point.

### **Local Authority Housing Data**

285. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the amount of council land banks zoned for social housing that have yet to have housing built on them by county, in tabular form; and the number and acreage of each individual land bank in each county. [34629/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department does not hold the data requested by the Deputy. Indeed, it is a matter for each local authority to satisfy itself that it has sufficient lands zoned to meet its overall housing needs, both in relation to wider residential development and in terms of lands on which social housing can be provided.

Under Rebuilding Ireland: an Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, 47,000 social housing units are to be delivered by 2021, with approximately 26,000 to be constructed, while 11,000 will be acquired by local authorities and approved housing bodies directly from the market or the Housing Agency, with a portion of these being newly built units. 10,000 units will be leased by local authorities and approved housing bodies. My Department is currently working closely with each local authority on their individual social housing delivery programmes, including in relation to their construction programmes and land issues arising.

### **Local Authority Boundaries Review**

286. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in the report of the Waterford reorganisation implementation group, as published in 2013 before the city and county councils merger, specifically the seven suggested high level interventions therein. [34636/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The merger of Waterford City Council and Waterford County Council took effect from 1 June 2014. It is a matter for the new authority, Waterford City and County Council, to ensure that the recommendations of the Implementation Group are progressed on behalf of the citizens of Waterford.

*Question No. 287 answered with Question No. 277.*

### **Local Authority Housing Waiting Lists**

288. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of persons, by county, who have been taken off the social housing lists as a result of failure to return forms during the recent housing needs assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34817/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** In line with a commitment given in the Social Housing Strategy 2020, summaries of social housing assessments will now be undertaken on an annual basis, starting this year. Work

on the 2016 summary is well advanced and I expect it to be finalised shortly. Data on the numbers failing to return assessment forms during the 2016 process will be compiled and included in the Summary findings.

The summary process requires all housing authorities to review those households who are on their housing list but who are not currently in receipt of housing support. This is to ensure that the details of the applicant households are up to date and accurate and that they remain eligible for, and in need of, social housing support in accordance with the criteria set down in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and associated Social Housing Assessment Regulations. As part of this assessment, all local authorities wrote to relevant households over the past number of months, including those in transitional and shared or emergency accommodation if relevant, informing them of the assessment process and seeking updated information where necessary.

In the event of an initial non-response by a household, guidance issued by the Housing Agency advised housing authorities to contact the household again and to use all reasonable means of communication available to them in contacting the applicant. Authorities were also advised to undertake local advertising campaigns informing households about the Summary. Where a number of attempts to contact a household failed to elicit a response, authorities were advised that the household's application may be closed. However, housing authorities were also advised that should the household subsequently respond with the information required within a reasonable time, the application could be re-activated.

### **Fire Stations Provision**

289. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government when construction of a new fire station in Macroom will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34896/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The provision of a fire service in its functional area, including the establishment and maintenance of a fire brigade, the assessment of fire cover needs, the provision of fire station premises, is a statutory function of individual fire authorities under 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.

My Department, earlier this year, 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. Under this programme, sixteen new-build fire stations are to be provided and ten fire stations are to be upgraded. The projects in the capital programme will be reassessed on an annual basis and priority may be adjusted to bring forward projects offering best value-for-money and to take account of the state of readiness of the projects.

A new fire station for Macroom is included in the Fire Services Capital Programme 2016-2020. My Department wrote to Cork County Council in July this year, in view of the significant capital allocation envisaged, requesting confirmation that any plans submitted remain current, or if new plans are proposed. The submission of a capital appraisal and revised cost plan was also requested. My Department currently awaits these submissions.



The indicative year for tendering for the Macroom project is 2017; however, all proposed projects in the programme will be reassessed on an on-going basis and priority will be given to projects offering the greatest value-for-money and earliest completion dates.

### Local Authority Expenditure

290. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if Tipperary County Council has purchased and signed a contract on a property under the Limerick regenerate proposal. [34908/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I understand that rather than purchasing a property, Tipperary County Council is seeking to acquire a site which includes an amount of housing, to facilitate the development of a project under the Limerick Hinterland Report. I understand that the draft contracts for this purchase are currently being considered by the Council.

### Homeless Accommodation Funding

291. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the total funding provided to each local authority by his Department for homeless services expressed in monetary terms and as a percentage of the local authorities' overall housing budgets, in tabular form; the reason his Department's contribution to homeless services has been declining as a percentage of the overall homeless budget from approximately 90% to in some cases only 70%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34976/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of accommodation, and related services, for homeless persons rests with housing authorities. Under Section 10 of the Housing Act 1988, my Department provides current funding to housing authorities towards the cost of providing homeless services, including accommodation. The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 1993 provide that such recoupment to housing authorities by my Department shall not exceed 90% of payments made; therefore this is a recoupment upper limit. Furthermore, housing authorities may also incur additional expenditure on homeless services outside of the 'Section 10' funding arrangements. The overall amounts incurred by housing authorities on housing and homelessness related expenditure are a matter for the individual housing authorities. The funding needs of the various regions are kept under review on an on-going basis.

Under Section 10 funding arrangements, funding in respect of homeless services is made available on a regional basis and a regional allocation is delegated to a lead-authority in each region. Given the statutory position, the exact amounts spent by housing authorities on housing and homelessness are a matter for those authorities and the amount of funding provided by my Department as a percentage of the local authorities' own housing budgets is not available in my Department. However, for information purposes, details of Exchequer funding drawn down to date in 2016 are set out in the following table on a regional basis.

| Funding under Section 10 of the Housing Act, 1988 |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Region  | 2016 to date - € |
| Dublin  | 44,662,925       |
| Mid-East  | 1,620,628        |
| Midland   | 801,028          |



| Funding under Section 10 of the Housing Act, 1988 |           |
|---|-----------|
| Mid-West  | 3,150,000 |
| North-East  | 925,639   |
| North-West  | 305,696   |
| South-East  | 2,423,997 |
| South-West  | 4,450,084 |
| West  | 1,800,000 |

### Planning Issues

292. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the strategic designated zones that have been designated to date and the year in which they were designated. [34983/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** SDZs designated by Government, and the relevant years of designation, are set out below.

- Adamstown South Dublin County Council (2001)
- Clonmagadden Meath County Council (2001)
- Hansfield Fingal County Council (2001)
- Clonburris-Balgaddy South Dublin County Council (2006 and 2015)
- Cherrywood Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (2010)
- Monard Cork County Council (2010)
- Grangegorman Dublin City Council (2010)
- Dublin Docklands Dublin City Council (2012)
- Poolbeg West Dublin City Council (2016)
- North Quays Waterford City and County Council (2016).

### Housing Policy

293. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago; the status of the progress made to date on action 1.1 to provide new units under the rapid build housing programme; the number of units that will be provided and ready for use in 2016 and in Q1 and Q2 of 2017; if any vacant units will be acquired in 2016 and the number that will be acquired in Q 1 and Q2 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35030/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department is working closely with the four Dublin local authorities in relation to the Rapid Delivery Programme. As such, 22 rapid build units have already been delivered and are occupied. Dublin City Council is currently advancing a number of rapid build projects, including on four sites at Finglas, Darndale, Cherry Orchard and Drimnagh, which will deliver a further 131 units. These units will be handed over to Dublin City Council on a phased basis

from the end of the year and delivery will be completed early in 2017. My Department is working closely with the Council to expedite delivery. The assignment of households to these units, once delivered, will be a matter for the City Council.

Further work is underway across the four local authorities, which will bring to 350 the total number of rapid delivery homes advancing through various stages of delivery, including construction, by the end of the year, on additional sites in Dublin city and on sites in Dun Laoghaire, Tallaght, Blanchardstown and Balbriggan. Construction dates will be finalised in the context of completion of procurement and award of contracts.

Rapid delivery needs to be viewed in the context of the wider range of solutions to address the unacceptable level of families in emergency accommodation, including 1,600 vacant units to be sourced by the Housing Agency and an expanded Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Homeless pilot scheme – 550 tenancies in 2016 and 1,200 in 2017 - across the greater Dublin region. More than 1,350 exits from homelessness were achieved nationally in the first half of this year and, in Dublin, a further 411 exits have been achieved in the third quarter. This compares to 2,322 sustainable exits from homelessness in 2015.

Work has commenced with local authorities from outside of Dublin in terms of advancing rapid build projects in their areas. Following the putting in place of the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) Framework, a workshop will take place in January 2017 to support all local authorities advance rapid build projects.

## Housing Policy

294. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the progress made to date on action 1.2 to transition homeless households and persons from emergency accommodation through the Dublin region HAP homeless pilot; the number of tenancies that have been created to date and the number that will be created in the first half of 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35031/16]

296. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.7; the new supports that have been put in place or proposed to be put in place for young persons leaving State care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35036/16]

298. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.10; the details of the enhanced interagency arrangements in place to support prisoners on their release; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35039/16]

304. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.18; the details of the access to independent expert legal and financial advice for persons who are insolvent and are in serious mortgage arrears on their home, that is now available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35047/16]

306. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four

months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.1; the construction and purchase plan for each local authority for 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35051/16]

307. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.2 to review existing current and capital programmes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35052/16]

310. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.5; the number of units acquired under this action to date in 2016; the number expected to be delivered by year end 2016 and delivered during 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35055/16]

311. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.6; the number of units acquired under this action to date in 2016; the number expected to be delivered by year end 2016 and delivered during 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35056/16]

313. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.8 to support the leasing of additional privately developed dwellings; the number of units secured under this action to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35058/16]

314. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.9 to establish a dedicated housing delivery office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35059/16]

315. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.10 that the housing agency will establish a housing procurement unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35060/16]

316. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.11 to review processes and procedures for approving and advancing housing construction projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35061/16]

317. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.12 to legislate to streamline Part 8 processes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35062/16]

319. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.14 to establish a dedicated one stop shop within the housing agency to support AHBs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35064/16]

325. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four

months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.20 to support community based living for persons with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35070/16]

326. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.21; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35071/16]

327. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.22 to extend the national housing strategy for persons with disabilities to 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35072/16]

328. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.23 to commission an expert independent review of capital and current funding for Traveller specific accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35073/16]

330. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 3.1 to establish a €200 million local infrastructure housing activation fund; the details of projects that are being approved at this stage under this fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35075/16]

332. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 3.3; the specific details of the competitive financing on a commercial basis that has been put in place to meet on-site and other infrastructure requirements on large development sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35077/16]

333. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 3.4; if he will list the key 15 to 20 pathfinder sites referred to in this action and advise of the timeline for development to commence on each site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35078/16]

335. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 3.6 to fast-track large-scale residential development planning applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35080/16]

336. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 3.7; the changes made and any additional resources given to An Bord Pleanála to ensure all planning appeals in relation to large-scale housing developments will be dealt with within the 18 week statutory objective period; if this 18 week time period has now been achieved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35081/16]

337. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and

Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 3.8 to develop and publish an implementation plan to prioritise implementation of key recommendations within the An Bord Pleanála review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35082/16]

340. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 3.11 to establish a competition to champion best practice, efficient and cost effective design and new approaches to both affordable and quality residential delivery; the status of the specific call for proposals and their evaluation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35085/16]

346. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 4.6 to introduce a new affordable rental scheme; the number of units of accommodation that have been secured under this new affordable rental scheme, in view of the fact this action had a Q3 timeline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35092/16]

347. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 4.10 to fund a student housing officer; if this officer is now in position as the timeline for this action was Q3 of 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35096/16]

349. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 4.13 to enable student accommodation projects for 100 units or more to go straight to An Bord Pleanála; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35099/16]

353. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 5.4 to introduce a choice based or equivalent allocation system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35103/16]

361. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 5.14 to progress a national taking in charge initiative with €10 million funding from DHPCLG in 2016 coupled to bond and local authority funding; the list of estates that have been taken in charge to date under this initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35113/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 294, 296, 298, 304, 306, 307, 310, 311, 313 to 317, inclusive, 319, 325 to 328, inclusive, 330, 332, 333, 335 to 337, inclusive 340, 346, 347, 349, 353 and 361 together.

I refer to the reply to Question No. 167 of 2 November 2016.

Implementation of the Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness is being advanced across a number of Departments, under the oversight of the Cabinet Committee on Housing, chaired by An Taoiseach. Within my own Department, an Implementation Board of senior officials, chaired by the Secretary General, monitors progress on a fortnightly basis.



In addition, Project Working Group structures for each of the Action Plan's five Pillars are being put in place to ensure that any operational considerations relating to the delivery of actions are identified early and resolved quickly and effectively.

Rebuilding Ireland contains a clear commitment to reporting regular progress, particularly through quarterly progress reports. The First Quarterly Progress Report on the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness - Rebuilding Ireland (in respect of Quarter 3 commitments and actions), which was published on 1 November and can be accessed at <http://rebuildingireland.ie/First-Progress-Report.pdf>, sets out the progress on the implementation of the actions referred to.

Further progress reports will follow on a quarterly basis, with the next due to be published in January 2017. Each Quarterly Report will focus on the actions due to be progressed or completed in the preceding quarter.

Since publication of the First Quarterly Progress Report earlier this month, further updates arise with regard to a number of actions as outlined in the following table below:

| Action No:    | Update since publication of Q3 Update Report (1st November)   |
|---------------|---|
| 2.12 3.6 4.13 | The Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Bill 2016 was published on 8 November 2016 and is being taken in the Seanad for Second Stage on Wednesday, 16 November.  |
| 3.1           | Under LIHAF, there will be two phases of announcements. An initial announcement for successful, smaller-scale projects will be made in mid-December and a second phase announcement by end March 2017 for those project bids requiring detailed financial appraisals.   |
| 3.4           | On Thursday, 10 November, at the launch of Pillar 3 of Rebuilding Ireland, prioritisation of 23 Major Urban Housing Delivery Sites across the four Dublin local authorities was announced, as well as sites in the major urban centres of Cork, Limerick and Galway. The potential total housing output from these sites is 30,000 homes in the medium-term (three to four years), doubling to 60,000 in the longer term. Further details in respect of these Major Urban Housing Delivery Sites, including a map of the locations concerned, is available at <a href="http://rebuildingireland.ie/build-more-homes/">http://rebuildingireland.ie/build-more-homes/</a> . |
| 4.6           | The affordable rental pilot scheme is being progressed within the context of the comprehensive strategy for the rental sector (Action 4.1), which is due for publication before the end of 2016.  |

### Homelessness Strategy

295. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.3 to establish one stop shop assessment centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35032/16]

297. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four



months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.9; the progress being made to provide a new facility in Dublin in 2017 to accommodate pregnant women who are homeless; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35038/16]

299. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.11; the details of the new national procedures being developed regarding the release and accommodation of sex offenders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35040/16]

300. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.12; the actions taken to date to ensure the provision of 300 tenancies in 2017 by Housing First teams in Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35041/16]

301. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.13; the details of the actions taken and the progress made focusing on persistent rough sleepers and long term homelessness households; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35042/16]

302. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.14; the analyses undertaken and the reasons found as to why offers of accommodation are not taken up by households in emergency accommodation in hotels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35043/16]

303. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status the progress made to date on action 1.17; the details of the national awareness campaign he intends rolling out in Q1 of 2017 targeted at families and persons concerned about or at risk of losing their homes; the details of the nationwide extension of the Threshold Tenancy Protection Service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35046/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 295, 297 and 299 to 303, inclusive, together.

Implementation of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness is being advanced across a number of departments and agencies, under the oversight of the Cabinet Committee on Housing, chaired by An Taoiseach. All of the sections are progressing in line with the identified timeframes in Rebuilding Ireland, which can be accessed at <http://rebuildingireland.ie/>.

Addressing homelessness is a top priority for me and for the Government as a whole. Over the last two years, Exchequer funding available from my Department for homelessness services has grown by 55%, with €70 million approved for this purpose in Budget 2016, compared to provision of approx. €53 million in 2015 and €45 million in 2014. The provision for homelessness services in 2017 has been increased further to €98 million.

A whole-of-Government approach is being taken to dealing with the issues associated with homelessness i.e. housing, welfare, healthcare, etc. The Homelessness Policy Implementation Team, originally established in 2014 to oversee and monitor the delivery of actions in the Government's Implementation Plan on the State's Response to Homelessness, continues to meet

under the auspices of my Department to drive the implementation of the various actions in Rebuilding Ireland. The team consists of senior officials drawn from key State agencies – the Departments of Social Protection; Health; and Children and Youth Affairs; the Health Service Executive; Tusla (the Child and Family Agency); the Irish Prison Service; the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive and representatives of the relevant housing authorities; along with my own Department. My Department is also engaging on an ongoing basis with officials from the lead local authorities in the nine homeless regions regarding the implementation of the actions in Rebuilding Ireland and the overall delivery of homeless services in the relevant regions.

Progress on the implementation of the specific Rebuilding Ireland actions referred to will be reported on in future quarterly progress reports, with each report focusing on the actions due for delivery during the immediately preceding quarter.

*Question No. 296 answered with Question No. 294.*

*Question No. 297 answered with Question No. 295.*

*Question No. 298 answered with Question No. 294.*

*Questions Nos. 299 to 303, inclusive, answered with Question No. 295.*

*Question No. 304 answered with Question No. 294.*

### **Mortgage to Rent Scheme**

305. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.21; the improvements he intends to make to the mortgage to rent scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35050/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Up to the end of Quarter 3 2016, a total of 3,498 cases had been submitted under the Mortgage to Rent (MTR) scheme which was introduced in 2012 for borrowers of private commercial lending institutions. Of the 3,498 cases submitted, 2,642 were ineligible or terminated during the process for a variety of reasons. Of the remaining cases submitted, 669 are being actively progressed and 187 have been completed. The scheme is part of the overall suite of social housing options and an important part of the mortgage arrears resolution process. A number of amendments were made to the scheme in July 2015 to enable more properties to qualify and to make the scheme more flexible and accessible to borrowers.

Notwithstanding the amendments already made to the scheme in 2015, the Government has included a review of the MTR scheme as an action in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. The review, currently underway, is examining what further amendments can be made to the scheme to make it work better for borrowers and my Department is consulting with key stakeholders in this regard. The review will also explore alternative models for the purchase of units, including long-term leasing arrangements. The review is to be completed by the end of the year.

*Questions Nos. 306 and 307 answered with Question No. 294.*

## Housing Assistance Payments Implementation

308. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.3 to accelerate the roll-out of the housing assistance payments scheme on a national basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35053/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The implementation of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme is a key Government priority and the accelerated roll-out of the scheme on a national basis is an important early action for completion in Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. HAP is now available to all qualified households in 19 local authority areas, with over 14,500 households currently being supported by the scheme and around 9,500 separate landlords and agents providing accommodation to those households. A breakdown of the number of households supported by HAP in each local authority area at the end of September 2016 is available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>. Rebuilding Ireland commits to accelerating the roll-out of the HAP scheme to nine further local authorities by the end of 2016 and the remaining three Dublin local authorities by the end of March 2017, completing the national roll-out of the scheme. An intensive programme of training for Cavan, Kerry, Laois, Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow County Councils is currently ongoing in preparation for the proposed introduction of the scheme in these areas from December 1, subject to the necessary regulations being in place.

The full roll-out of the scheme will be completed by March 2017, with the introduction of HAP to the administrative areas of Dublin City Council, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown and Fingal County Council. A multi-agency HAP Implementation Dublin Working Group has been established to advise and prepare for the introduction of the scheme to the Dublin region based on experience of the roll-out to date, and the particular pressures and characteristics of the rental market in Dublin.

## Housing Policy

309. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.4, wherein the NTMA will work with the private sector to establish a funding vehicle capable of facilitating off balance sheet investment in delivering social and private housing; when this funding vehicle will be operational; the number of housing units to be delivered through this mechanism in 2017 and 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35054/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Work on developing the new funding vehicle is underway within the NTMA. Potential models for the structure of the vehicle are being examined and bilateral engagement is ongoing between the NTMA and my Department. A critical factor in the delivery of the action will be that the funding vehicle is 'off balance sheet' from a Government accounting perspective. Consultation involving EUROSTAT and the Central Statistics Office to address considerations affecting the potential balance-sheet treatment of the vehicle is ongoing. If significant challenges in respect of both the commercial and the 'on-/off-balance sheet' treatment of such a vehicle can be addressed satisfactorily, the objective is to establish a Special Purpose Vehicle

(SPV) in 2017 to acquire properties for onward leasing to local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies under long-term leasing arrangements that are already well established in the market. It is envisaged that the SPV, if commercial and off-balance sheet treatment are established, has the potential to provide in the order of 5,000 units over a five-year period for social housing purposes. This would include provision in respect of 2017 and 2018.

*Questions Nos. 310 and 311 answered with Question No. 294.*

### **Housing Provision**

312. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 2.7 to enhance land management and utilise land to the greatest extent possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35057/16]

334. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 3.5 to prepare a national land supply management strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35079/16]

348. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 4.12 to carry out an assessment of scope for provision of additional student accommodation on local authority or other publicly owned lands; when this assessment will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35098/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 312, 334 and 348 together.

The active pursuit of progressing housing developments on State lands, including local authority lands, is a major part of the new approach to housing provision under Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

Rebuilding Ireland contains a number of integrated actions to underpin State land supply management, including the preparation of a Strategic Management Plan for the sites under the Land Aggregation Scheme (Action 2.7); the development of a National Land Supply Management Strategy (Action 3.5), within the context of the new National Planning Framework; and an assessment of the scope for the provision of additional student accommodation on local authority or other publicly- owned lands (Action 4.12).

In accordance with the timelines outlined in Rebuilding Ireland, the Housing Agency is preparing a Strategic Management Plan for all Land Aggregation Scheme sites which will be completed in the first Quarter of 2017. The broader National Land Supply Management Strategy is being developed with in the context of the National Planning Framework which is due to be finalised by mid- 2017.

In this regard, my Department has commenced work on assembling data on the location and availability of local authority or other publicly owned lands for the purpose of the provision of new housing, including additional student accommodation. This work is being conducted with the support of the Housing Agency; relevant Government Departments and Agencies; local authorities and the Office of Public Works in the context of its work in relation to the State

Property Register.

To date, data on over 700 individual local authority and Land Aggregation Scheme sites has been gathered and collated. The identification of other publicly owned lands will focus initially on the main urban areas (i.e. Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford). Once the broader data set is available, during the first Quarter of 2017, I anticipate that this will provide an enhanced basis for identification of lands for the provision of increased housing, including for student accommodation, in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills and other stakeholders.

During this data gathering phase, a number of early actions have already been undertaken by local authorities and the Housing Agency to progress housing development on sites in public ownership, particularly in areas of high housing demand. One such proposal was announced by South Dublin County Council at the recent launch event for Pillar 3 of Rebuilding Ireland in relation to a site that could yield almost 1,000 new homes in Kilcarberry, Clondalkin. I expect further proposals to be brought forward by other local authorities in the coming months.

Rebuilding Ireland contains a clear commitment to reporting regular progress, through both a monthly housing activity report and a quarterly overall progress report. The First Quarterly Progress Report on the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness – Rebuilding Ireland (in respect of Quarter 3 2016 commitments and actions) was published on 1 November 2016, and can be accessed through the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/First-Progress-Report.pdf>.

Further progress reports will be published on a quarterly basis, with the next due to be published in January 2017. Each Quarterly Report will focus on the actions due to be progressed or completed in the preceding quarter.

*Questions Nos. 313 to 317, inclusive, answered with Question No. 294.*

### **Approved Housing Bodies**

318. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 2.13 to introduce an AHB innovation fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35063/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** A number of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) have begun work on developing innovative financial models to fund their delivery of social housing. It is hoped that these efforts could potentially present the opportunity for delivery on a significant scale, while also meeting off-balance sheet requirements and achieving lower cost long term fixed price funding for AHBs.

To encourage and support further activity in this area, my Department established an Innovation Fund in April 2016 to support AHBs in their development of innovative financial models that would assist in improving the capacity of the sector. €300,000 has been provided in 2016 as a fund for which Tier 3 AHBs can apply. It is anticipated that further funding will be made available in 2017.

Access to funding is on the basis of formal applications made to my Department. Details of the fund were circulated in April 2016 and a further reminder issued in July 2016 calling for applications to be submitted for consideration. The closing date for receipt of applications was 1 November 2016. My Department is currently examining the applications received in line with



the criteria set down in the call for proposals.

*Question No. 319 answered with Question No. 294.*

### **Approved Housing Bodies**

320. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 2.15 to establish a regulator for the AHB sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35065/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) have a key role in the delivery of social housing, as recognised in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. In this context, regulation is important in order to underpin stability in the sector, to better protect tenants and to safeguard public and private investment in AHBs and the assets developed through that investment.

In 2014, my Department established an interim Regulation Committee (iRC) under the auspices of the Housing Agency and supported by a Regulation Office within the Agency. The committee was set up to oversee implementation of the voluntary regulation code for AHBs, published in July 2013, and to advise on statutory regulation. To date, 243 AHBs have signed up to the voluntary code.

Recently, the Regulation Office published their second Annual Report. The annual report provides an overview of those AHBs signed up to the Code, insight as to the size, scale, ambitions and risk appetite of the sector; establishes and shares good practice; and identifies some of the challenges for AHBs arising from the regulatory assessments. A copy of the report can be found at the following link: <https://www.housingagency.ie/regulation/publications-and-useful-links.aspx>.

Encouragingly, the number of AHBs that have now signed up to the Voluntary Code (243) represents 90% of all housing stock held by AHBs which means that some 26,900 AHB homes are now protected. Under the code, AHBs that have signed up to regulation are assessed in terms of their governance, financial viability and their performance in the provision of social housing.

While the code is voluntary at present, the development of a statutory regulatory framework has commenced with the General Scheme of the Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Bill 2015 approved for drafting by Government in September 2015. Pre-legislative scrutiny of the proposed Bill took place in December 2015. My Department is currently examining the recommendations of the Joint Committee as well as the stakeholder submissions on the General Scheme to ensure that the drafted legislation is reasonable, proportionate and appropriate to the differing needs of AHBs and serves to underpin a regulatory system that facilitates a growth of capacity and efficiency in the sector. It is expected that the legislation will be published in the first quarter of 2017.

### **Housing Policy**

321. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness



four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 2.16 to bring forward pilot projects for housing initiatives for older persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35066/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** Older persons have specific housing requirements such as being in proximity to their family and social networks and the need for access to public and other essential services, recreation and amenities. In recognition of this, Action 2.16 of the Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, commits to a number of pilot projects being advanced, beginning with Dublin City Council, based on best practice and cost effectiveness, taking a cross departmental inter-agency approach to housing initiatives for older people.

Last month, my colleague, Minister Coveney, formally launched the Housing with Supports report, which was the work of an Interagency Housing Working Group, led by Age Friendly Ireland, and which included a representative from my Department. The purpose of the Inter-agency Housing Working Group was to explore the options to better accommodate older people within their community rather than in residential care.

A Steering Group has been established comprising representatives from the Department of Health, the HSE, Dublin City Council, the Irish Council for Social Housing and my Department to guide delivery of the project and to harness the potential for mainstreaming best practice.

I understand that Dublin City Council has identified a potential site which is located next to a HSE health centre, which includes a Primary Health Care Centre. This site will be used to implement the initial pilot project of 50-60 units suitable for older people. I am advised that a capital appraisal for this project is currently being prepared for early submission to my Department for funding approval.

### **Housing Adaptation Grant**

322. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 2.17 to increase the target of the housing adaptation grant draw down to 10,000 homes in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35067/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** In line with the commitment in Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, it is my intention to provide funding to support 10,000 homes under the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability in 2017. Allocations for next year under the grants scheme will be announced in due course.

### **Housing Policy**

323. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 2.18 to develop policy options for supported housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35068/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon**

**Coveney):** My Department is working with the Department of Health and other key stakeholders to develop a policy position that will facilitate the greater use in Ireland of the model of “housing with supports” for older people. This accommodation model provides each person with their own premises and privacy, while facilitating social contact with other older people and in some cases providing homecare on site, and possibly access to nursing care, a security presence, etc. I expect to publish a policy paper on this topic in 2017.

As part of a cross-sectoral approach to developing this housing model for older people, the Dublin City Housing Working Group - which includes representatives from my Department, Dublin City Council, the Department of Health, the HSE and relevant NGOs - has developed a pilot project. The project has been included as one of the demonstration projects in *Rebuilding Ireland - Action Plan for Housing & Homelessness (under action number 2.16)*. It will comprise 50/60 self-contained units, for single people and couples, accommodating a mix of people with varying support needs. It will have a team of support staff based on-site, as well as providing outreach services for people within a defined catchment area.

### **Housing Policy**

324. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 2.19 to create pilot competitions focusing on smart technologies, adaptation of existing housing and lifetime communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35069/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** In July 2016, the Government launched the Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. Action 2.19 provided that we would create a pilot competition, focusing on three distinct areas, namely, smart technologies in housing for older people, adaptation of existing houses to meet the needs of older people and life-time communities.

My Department has established a Steering Group consisting of representatives from the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland, the Construction Industry Federation, the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, Dublin City Council and Enterprise Ireland, to oversee the roll-out of the design challenge.

The Steering Group has already met twice in order to elaborate on the competition brief which aims to stimulate, and support collaboration among, the design, construction and technology sectors to be innovative in providing solutions for older people within our built environment. In this regard, the challenge will be inclusive of anyone with feasible and cost effective ideas which have potential for mainstreaming into the future.

To raise awareness of the competition and incentivise the professional, building and community sectors to make submissions, I announced, on 20 September 2016, that my Department is providing €100,000 prize money to support the Homes for Smart Ageing: Universal Design Challenge competition. The third meeting of the Steering Group will take place next week and it is intended that a call for proposals under the competition will be launched in December 2016.

*Questions Nos. 325 to 328, inclusive, answered with Question No. 294.*

### **Refugee Resettlement Programme**

329. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 2.24 to establish an operational sub-group to support and co-ordinate the process of housing refugees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35074/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An operational sub-group under the auspices of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme Taskforce composed of all relevant Departments of State and other bodies, such as representatives of local authorities and the Irish Red Cross, is currently being established to support the process of housing these refugees. This sub-group will be co-chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality and my own Department.

Arrangements are being advanced at local authority level to support the housing of these refugees, including through the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (HAP), and a range of other supports will be made available at local level to support the integration of individuals into their new communities.

*Question No. 330 answered with Question No. 294.*

### **Housing Policy**

331. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 3.2; the details of the uptake of the scheme by local authorities to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35076/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Action 3.2 of Rebuilding Ireland provides for the provision of capacity through increased borrowing and access to Housing Finance Agency (HFA) financing for participating local authorities to provide matching funding for the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF).

The Housing Finance Agency has agreed to work with local authorities to facilitate access to matching funds. On 29 August 2016 the HFA corresponded with local authorities to inform them that local authorities have access to loan finance options through the HFA subject to the normal approval process (i.e. Council resolution and Department sanction). The HFA further advised that they would be able to tailor the match funding as required to support a local authority's application for the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund, with offers ranging from short term variable rate finance up to long term fixed rate, at very competitive interest rates.

In addition, effective from 1 October 2016, the HFA reduced the interest rates charged on existing offerings and approved a range of new fixed rate lending products to support the funding of new social housing and infrastructure projects by AHBs and local authorities. The new range of products provides extremely competitive fixed interest rates ranging from 5 to 30 years. Local authorities will be able to borrow fixed rate funding for 25 years at 1.5% or lower. The interest rate reduction will result in saving of €6m per annum on interest rate payments by local authorities.

Proposals received under the LIHAF are currently being evaluated and assessed in line with the criteria set down in the call for proposals. The uptake in respect of the accessing of matching funding by individual local authorities will be dependent on the outcome of this process in respect of the specific projects selected.

*Questions Nos. 332 and 333 answered with Question No. 294.*

*Question No. 334 answered with Question No. 312.*

*Questions Nos. 335 to 337, inclusive, answered with Question No. 294.*

### **Planning Issues**

338. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 3.9 to support the development of online planning services for the local authority sector and An Bord Pleanála; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35083/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016, published in January 2016, proposes to amend section 33 of the Planning and Development Act to empower the Minister to make regulations to facilitate the on-line submission of planning applications and appeals, including relevant fees, by electronic means (referred to as e-planning) to planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála respectively. The Bill further proposes that decisions in relation to planning applications and appeals may also be dealt with by planning authorities and by An Bord Pleanála respectively by electronic means.

These proposals are amongst a broad package of measures currently being progressed by my Department to facilitate the further streamlining of the planning system, to bring it up to date technologically, and to make it more administratively efficient. The Bill will shortly be concluding Second Stage debate in the Dáil and it is my intention to make the necessary regulations to underpin the introduction of e-planning at an early date following its enactment, with a view to facilitating its accelerated roll-out across the local authority sector and An Bord Pleanála by end 2017, as envisaged in action 3.9 of Rebuilding Ireland – An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

### **Planning Issues**

339. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 3.10 to implement a root and branch review of the planning system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35084/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am currently progressing two Bills through the Houses of the Oireachtas proposing significant reforms of the planning system. The Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016 is primarily intended to give legislative effect to the planning-related recommendations of the Final Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into Certain Planning Matters and Payments (otherwise known as the Mahon Tribunal), including the establishment of the new independent Office of the Planning Regulator. The Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Bill 2016 provides for the legislative underpinning of a number of key priority commitments in the Government's Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness – Rebuilding Ireland, published in July 2016.

Action 3.10 of the Action Plan incorporates a commitment to commence a “root and branch”

review of the planning system, particularly around forecasting, planning and delivering residential development and taking account of the work underway in relation to the development of the National Planning Framework. It is intended to commence the implementation of this action in the first quarter of 2017, in line with the timeline indicated in the Action Plan.

*Question No. 340 answered with Question No. 294.*

### **Private Rented Accommodation**

341. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 4.1 to develop a comprehensive strategy for the rental sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35087/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Pillar 4 of the Rebuilding Ireland, entitled “Improve the Rental Sector”, commits to developing a comprehensive strategy for the rental sector in Q4 2016. The Strategy, which is on track to be finalised and published by the end of this year, will provide a vision for the development of a stable, strong and viable rental sector offering true choice for households, investment opportunities for providers and reflecting the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords.

The Strategy will be centred on the four critical areas of security, supply, standards and services. Following a stakeholder consultation event in Dublin on 20 October 2016, written submissions on policy matters relevant to the rental sector were invited from interested parties, up to 7 November 2016. Submissions were received from a wide range of stakeholders, which will contribute to shaping the strategy.

Rebuilding Ireland contains a clear commitment to reporting regular progress, through both a monthly housing activity report and a quarterly overall progress report. The First Quarterly Progress Report on the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness - Rebuilding Ireland (in respect of Quarter 3 2016 commitments and actions) was published on 1 November 2016, and can be accessed through the following link:- <http://rebuildingireland.ie/First-Progress-Report.pdf>.

### **Private Rented Accommodation**

342. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 4.2 to legislate to deal with circumstances where there are sales of property with tenants in situ and to address the Residential Tenancies Board’s enforcement and dispute resolution powers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35088/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Pillar 4 of Rebuilding Ireland, entitled “Improve the Rental Sector”, commits to bringing forward legislation to amend the Residential Tenancies Acts for early enactment. These legislative proposals will be given effect through the Planning and Development (Housing ) and Residential Tenancies Bill. The Bill includes measures to prevent a future recurrence of situations where large numbers of residents in a single development are simultaneously served with termination notices, together with other early actions to enhance the Residential Tenancies Board’s (RTB) enforcement and dispute resolution powers.



The Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Bill 2016 was published on 8 November 2016 and is scheduled for Seanad Second Stage on Wednesday, 16 November 2016 .

Rebuilding Ireland contains a clear commitment to reporting regular progress, through both a monthly housing activity report and a quarterly overall progress report. The First Quarterly Progress Report on the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness – Rebuilding Ireland (in respect of Quarter 3 2016 commitments and actions) was published on 1 November 2016, and can be accessed through the following link:- <http://rebuildingireland.ie/First-Progress-Report.pdf>.

Further progress reports will be published on a quarterly basis, with the next, in respect of Quarter 4 2016 commitments and actions, due to be published in January 2017. Each Quarterly Report will focus on the actions due to be progressed or completed in the preceding quarter.

### **Private Rented Accommodation Standards**

343. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 4.3 to complete the review of the Housing (Standards for Rental Houses) Regulations 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35089/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am committed to developing a real and meaningful strategy for the rental sector to enable it to develop to its full potential. Ensuring quality accommodation standards in the sector is an integral part of this process.

Minimum standards for rental accommodation are prescribed in the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008, as amended by the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) (Amendment) Regulations 2009, made under section 18 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992. The Regulations specify requirements in relation to a range of matters, such as structural repair, sanitary facilities, heating, ventilation, natural light and safety of gas and electrical supply. With very limited exemptions, these regulations apply to local authority and voluntary housing units as well as private rented residential accommodation. All landlords have a legal obligation to ensure that their rented properties comply with these regulations.

To ensure that the standards reflect the requirements of a modern rental market, a review of the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008, as amended, has been initiated. The review is at an advanced stage with new regulations currently being finalised for conclusion before the end of the year.

Additionally, as indicated in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, a number of measures in relation to improving the enforcement of standards will be considered in developing the strategy for the rental sector, including a move towards delivery of enforcement services on a regional basis.

Rebuilding Ireland contains a clear commitment to reporting regular progress, through both a monthly housing activity report and a quarterly overall progress report. The First Quarterly Progress Report on the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness – Rebuilding Ireland (in respect of Quarter 3 2016 commitments and actions) was published on 1 November 2016, and can be accessed through the following link:- <http://rebuildingireland.ie/First-Progress-Report.pdf>.

Further progress reports will be published on a quarterly basis, with the next, in respect of



Quarter 4 2016 commitments and actions, due to be published in January 2017. Each Quarterly Report will focus on the actions due to be progressed or completed in the preceding quarter.

### **Residential Tenancies Board Remit**

344. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 4.4, to extend the role of the Residential Tenancies Board to include a one stop shop; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35090/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Action 4.4 of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness commits to extending the role of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) to include a one stop shop for accessible information and advice. My Department is working with the RTB towards the Quarter 1 2017 delivery timescale, including consideration of the appropriate structure/format for the One Stop Shop.

My Department recently sanctioned a dedicated Communications and Research Manager post within the RTB to lead in this area of work. The RTB will commence recruiting for this post shortly.

### **Private Rented Accommodation Provision**

345. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 4.5 to examine standards, costs and feasibility of build to rent on a large scale and commission research on ways in which further investment might be encouraged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35091/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Pillar 4 of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness commits to developing a comprehensive strategy for the rental sector in Q4 2016. The strategy will lay out measures to address immediate issues affecting the supply, cost and accessibility of accommodation. There will also be a focus on maintaining existing levels of rental stock and encouraging investment in additional supply, including through build to rent approaches.

As a first step in this regard, my Department issued Circular APH 5 - 2016 to local authorities in October 2016, requesting them to prioritise Build-to-Rent projects coming forward from housing providers for consideration in their areas and emphasising the critical role that such projects can play in addressing the current severe shortage of rental accommodation.

Local authorities were also requested to consider the use of lands in their ownership for such projects and were invited to put forward proposals to my Department for consideration in that regard.

Clarity was also provided in the circular on the planning issues related to such housing schemes, including in relation to appropriate housing types and locations, management, Part V requirements, amenities, car parking, etc. Specific amendments were also made in the circular to the Design Standards for New Apartment Guidelines (2015) in order to provide greater certainty for the consideration of such developments by planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála.

*Questions Nos. 346 and 347 answered with Question No. 294.*

*Question No. 348 answered with Question No. 312.*

*Question No. 349 answered with Question No. 294.*

### **Social and Affordable Housing Provision**

350. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 5.1 to develop a national vacant housing re-use strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35100/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Action 5.1 of the Government's Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness – Rebuilding Ireland commits to develop a National Vacant Housing Re-Use Strategy by Q1 2017. To this end, the Housing Agency, which has lead responsibility for co-ordinating the development of the Strategy, has established a working group to inform the Strategy, with senior representatives from my Department, local authorities and from the Housing Agency itself. The working group has met twice to date with a further meeting scheduled for later this month.

My Department and the Housing Agency are liaising with local authorities and with the Central Statistics Office in order to obtain a better understanding of the numbers, characteristics and reasons why homes are vacant. A number of local authorities have commenced, or are planning to commence, pilot programmes to identify vacant homes and bring them back into use; these pilot programmes will help to inform the Strategy. Furthermore, the Strategy will be informed by international best practice and experience, and research is currently being undertaken in this area.

While the development of the Strategy is being progressed, I have already announced a number of new initiatives aimed at addressing vacancy and facilitating the reuse of vacant houses. A new Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) has recently been launched by my Department to assist private property owners and local authorities, or Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), to bring vacant houses into social housing use as new homes for families on local authority waiting lists. The new Scheme will operate initially in Waterford and Carlow and my Department will work closely with other local authorities to roll it out around the country over the course of the next six months.

I have secured €140m for the successful implementation of this scheme over the next five years. This scheme has significant potential and I am hopeful that it can bring at least 3,500 vacant houses back into productive use between now and 2021.

In addition, under a new “Buy and Renew” initiative, my Department will support local authorities and AHBs to purchase private housing units in need of remediation, which will be refurbished and made available for social housing use. An initial capital provision of €25 million is being made available for this initiative in 2017.

### **Social and Affordable Housing**

351. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 5.2 to review the disparate systems

of differential rents for social housing across local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35101/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The making and amending of rent schemes is the responsibility of local authorities as an integral part of their housing management functions, subject to broad principles laid down by my Department in Circular letter HRT 3/2002 of 6 March 2002. Section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, not yet commenced, provides for the introduction of a national differential rents framework that will harmonise local authority rent levels, while retaining some discretion for individual authorities to set rents in their own areas.

Considerable work has been carried out by my Department in developing a draft framework for a harmonisation of the approach to be taken by local authorities in regard to various aspects of rent schemes. The proposals are currently being reviewed in light of the broader commitment given in Rebuilding Ireland, the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness to review the disparate systems of differential rent in place across local authorities. This review will be completed by the end of Quarter 2 2017.

### **Social and Affordable Housing Provision**

352. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 5.3 to work with local authorities to speed up the refurbishment and where possible the re-letting of vacant social housing units; the number of vacant units in each local authority and the average length of time units are vacant in each local authority in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35102/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Since the publication of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan, I have provided additional support to local authorities by funding an ambitious plan which is tackling the backlog of vacant units that had accumulated. This has resulted in a reduced rate of vacancy reported by some local authorities, including the larger city authorities, of 1-2% of their overall stock. In June 2016 there was an initial allocation of almost €24m for works on 1,300 vacant units. In September, an additional €13.3m was allocated for 755 units. Some further allocations have been made to local authorities on a case by case basis as the need is identified. The exchequer funding my Department provides to prepare vacant units for re-letting is available as an additional support over and above what local authorities provide themselves towards such work and the authorities can and do contribute additional funding if they so wish. My Department's funding is to support the authorities in tackling those houses that may require a greater level of remediation than the normal level of pre-letting repairs that is the responsibility of local authorities as part of their on-going repair and maintenance of local authority housing. Funding is given on the condition the re-letting of vacant social housing units is achieved with minimal delay.

General statistics on local authority housing stock, including units that may be empty, are published by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC). The average length of time units are vacant is not recorded. The most recent statistics are in respect of 2015 and are available at the following link: <http://noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2015-PI-Report.pdf>.

*Question No. 353 answered with Question No. 294.*

### **Tenant Purchase Scheme**

354. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 5.5; whether the review of the tenant purchase scheme is ongoing or will only take place after a year of operation of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35104/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** In line with the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government and reaffirmed in Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, I intend to undertake a review of the Incremental (Tenant) Purchase Scheme in January 2017, following the first 12 months of operation. On foot of that review, I will bring forward any changes to the terms and conditions of the scheme which are considered necessary based on the evidence gathered at that stage.

*Question No. 355 answered with Question No. 282.*

### **Social and Affordable Housing Provision**

356. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 5.7; the details of the pilot repair and leasing initiative he has initiated; and the timeline to expand this initiative and, in particular, to establish it in Dublin where the housing crisis is most severe. [35106/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness recognises the important source of potential accommodation vacant private properties present. The Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) has been developed to assist private property owners and local authorities or Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) to harness this potential, and bring these vacant houses into social housing use to provide homes for families on local authority waiting lists.

The new scheme was launched in Waterford and Carlow in early October 2016 on a pilot basis, and depending on the take-up from private property owners, will be rolled out to further local authorities. The purpose of the pilot is to ensure that the scheme is workable from local authorities' and AHBs' perspectives. It is anticipated that other local authorities will come into the scheme on a rolling basis, with full roll-out expected within 6 months. Given that the launch was very recent no statistics on the RLS are available as yet.

AHBs have a proven record in managing the refurbishment of properties and being good landlords puts them in an excellent position to play a key role in the success of the scheme. Several AHBs will be working together with the Waterford and Carlow local authorities to manage the scheme in those particular areas. As the scheme is rolled out in other local authority areas, more AHBs around the country will become involved with other local authorities.

The scheme is targeted at owners of vacant properties who cannot afford or access the funding required to bring them up to the standard for rental property. Subject to the suitability of the property for social housing, and the agreement of the property owner, the cost of the necessary repairs will be met upfront by the local authority or the AHB. This allows for the property owner to sign-up to a lease arrangement for a length that is linked to the value of the repairs, subject to a minimum of 10 years. The value of the repairs will then be offset incrementally against the agreed rental payment over a defined period within the lease.

Over the period 2016 to 2021 it is anticipated that up to 3,500 units will be secured for social

housing under this scheme. €6m has been budgeted for 2017, with a target of 150 units. The availability of a national scheme from mid-2017 will see an increase in activity and budget from 2018 onwards.

### **Care of the Elderly Provision**

357. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 5.8 to explore ways in which to promote the availability of step down specialist housing for older persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35107/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Pillar 5 of Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is focussed on achieving optimum occupancy of the country's existing housing stock so as to meet national housing needs in as effective a way as possible.

Providing older people with the option of moving to specialist accommodation which is more suited to their needs is one measure which could potentially free up larger dwellings for use as family homes. My Department is exploring ways in which this can be facilitated within the operational framework of Rebuilding Ireland.

This work, which is due for completion by Quarter 2 of 2017, will build on existing initiatives in this area such as Dublin City Council's Financial Contribution Scheme for Older Persons which has facilitated a number of older people to down-size from their privately owned homes that had become too large for them, thus increasing the stock of family homes.

### **Planning Issues**

358. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 5.9, to review planning legislation to allow the change of use of vacant commercial units in urban areas into residential units without having to go through the planning process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35108/16]

359. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 5.11, to establish a ministerial-led urban renewal working group; if this group has been established; when it first met and when it is expected to bring forward proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35110/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 358 and 359 together.

The Programme for a Partnership Government, published in May 2016, sets out the ambitious priority attached to urban regeneration by the Government, incorporating a series of specific actions aimed at facilitating the regeneration of our urban centres, many of which have been adversely impacted by our recent economic difficulties. The Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, published in July 2016, further reinforces the Government's commitment to the area of urban regeneration.



In this context and further to Action 5.11 of the Action Plan, a Working Group, chaired by my colleague, the Minister of State in my Department with responsibility for Housing and Urban Renewal, and comprising of senior representatives from my Department, local authorities and other relevant bodies, has been established with a view to bringing forward proposals for new urban regeneration measures by the end of the year.

It is intended that the new measures will complement the existing regeneration programme under my Department's Social Housing Capital Programme, as well as other social regeneration initiatives already under way. The inaugural meeting of the Working Group took place on 15 June last, and has met twice since with a further meeting scheduled for later this month.

As part of its deliberations and in line with the commitment in Action 5.9 of the Action Plan, the Working Group is presently reviewing planning legislation to allow the change of use of vacant commercial premises in urban areas, including vacant or under-utilised areas over ground floor premises, into residential units without having to go through the planning process.

### **Unfinished Housing Developments**

360. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government following the publication of his action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago, the status of the progress made to date on action 5.13, to resolve unfinished housing developments in order to target opportunities for strategic acquisition and redevelopment of brownfield development sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35112/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Action 5.13 of Rebuilding Ireland - Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness commits to the alignment of the social housing investment programme and ongoing work in resolving unfinished housing developments in order to target opportunities for strategic acquisition and re-development of brownfield development sites, drawing on a further 2016 National Housing Development Survey.

The 2016 survey of unfinished housing developments is currently under way. It is expected that the survey results, including a breakdown of unfinished housing developments in each local authority area, together with progress reports and additional useful information in relation to the prospects for resolving the remaining Unfinished Housing Developments, will be published by my Department before the end of this year.

*Question No. 361 answered with Question No. 294.*

### **Local Authority Staff Data**

362. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of Dublin City Council employees, broken down by department and area; the number of new employees over the past five years, by department; and the number of those who are tradesmen or apprentices, in tabular form. [35118/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, each Chief Executive is responsible for staffing and organisation arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the local authorities for which he or she is responsible.

My Department gathers quarterly data on staff numbers in local authorities and the number



employed in Dublin City Council, on a whole time equivalent basis, at the end of September 2016 was 5,295. The data gathered focuses on broad numbers relating to employees, and is not broken down by department and area. Accordingly, the information requested is not available in my Department.

### **Water Services Infrastructure**

363. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of design build operate contracts and design build contracts in water services in operation here; and the estimated cost of the remaining life of these contracts, with a breakdown of the annual cost of these contracts. [35122/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels. This includes design, build and operate contracts for both water and wastewater treatment plants as well as any design build contracts. Irish Water has established a dedicated team to deal with representations and queries from public representatives. The team can be contacted via email to [oireachtasmembers@water.ie](mailto:oireachtasmembers@water.ie) or by telephone on a dedicated number, 1890 578 578.

In relation to the rural water services sector, design, build and operate contracts are used for water treatment plants for group water schemes. There are no design, build and operate contract based wastewater treatment plants or design build contracts in this sector.

Over 140 group water schemes operate under design, build and operate contracts. The estimated remaining life for the operate phase of these contracts is between 10 and 15 years. The annual costs are being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy in accordance with Standing Orders.

### **EU Directives**

364. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government when a water extraction licensing regime will be introduced; if such a regime is required under the terms of the Water Framework Directive; and if such a register would apply to all water extraction including public and commercial operations. [35123/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Water Framework Directive requires that abstractions of surface water or ground water which are likely to have a significant effect on water status must be regulated. My Department is currently examining how best to address this requirement in a proportionate and efficient way.

While no decisions will be made on any proposals in this regard until thorough public consultation is undertaken, I expect that a proportionate abstraction control regime can be developed that would effectively manage abstraction risks and pressures without imposing an unnecessary regulatory burden. Recognising the relatively low abstraction pressures in Ireland, the scale and extent of which will be set out in a draft River Basin Management Plan I expect to publish for public consultation in the coming months, it is expected that such a regime would focus on the most significant abstraction volumes and pressures, recognising that the Directive does not require the registration and licensing of private wells serving individual domestic dwellings.

## Mortgage Protection Policies

365. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views on the mortgage protection insurance scheme which charges local authority borrowers a 0.47% premium; if, in view of this high charge local authority borrowers can obtain mortgage protection insurance on the open market at more competitive prices and satisfy his Department and local authorities they have adequate mortgage protection insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35142/16]

**Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The local authority mortgage protection insurance (MPI) scheme is overseen by the Mortgage Protection Committee which is a sub-committee of the County and City Management Association (CCMA) and is representative of the CCMA, local authorities, the Housing Finance Agency and my Department. The local authority MPI scheme has applied to all house purchase loans approved by local authorities after 1 July 1986. One of the conditions of the scheme, which is a group policy, is that it is obligatory for all local authority borrowers who meet the eligibility criteria to join the scheme. Altering this condition would have a negative impact on the scheme and increase the cost for all existing borrowers. A local authority housing loan applicant who is not eligible for the local authority MPI scheme must source a suitable comparable individual MPI policy from the market.

There are a number of differences between the local authority MPI scheme and standard MPI products available on the market. Standard MPI products are individually priced based on a member's age, amongst other factors, whereas the local authority MPI scheme is a group arrangement offering a single group rate per €1,000 sum assured to all participants in the scheme.

Aside from the difference between an individual and a group rate, the following factors are the main influences on the price of the local authority MPI scheme:

- i. standard mortality and morbidity factors based on population statistics;
- ii. the local authority borrowers' risk profile;
- iii. the terms and conditions of the local authority MPI scheme and, in particular, the fact that all eligible local authority housing loan borrowers are accepted without medical evidence; and
- iv. the claims experience of the local authority MPI scheme.

The Local Authority MPI scheme also provides extra benefits, such as;

- mortgage repayments are paid if there is a valid claim as a result of disability;
- separate to life cover, an additional €3,000 is payable in the event of a member's death; and
- members are covered for death up to age 75 whereas standard MPI cover usually ceases at the age of 65.

The Mortgage Protection Committee which oversees the scheme endeavours to achieve a balance between the most economic rate to be charged for the scheme and the benefits provided. As part of the current re-tendering process, the Committee will seek to secure with effect from 1 January 2017, the most appropriate Mortgage Protection Insurance cover at the best value for money for local authority borrowers.

## **Services for People with Disabilities**

366. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection the consideration his Department has given a programme (details supplied) for funding in the context of budget 2016, noting that its current funding is set to expire in a number of weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34800/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Providing Equal Employment Routes (PEER) project was one of 14 disability activation projects (DACT), in the Border, Midlands & West region, which were jointly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Department of Social Protection (DSP), from the end of 2012 to April 2015. The project was delivered by the Walkinstown Association for People with an Intellectual Disability (WALK).

After the ending of ESF funding, as provided for in EU regulations, my Department understands that the WALK PEER project obtained additional funding from other sources. As this additional funding terminated in July 2016, and following representations from WALK regarding funding difficulties relating to the PEER project, I decided to provide some short term funding to this project to enable it to continue service provision until early next year.

Recent work by the NDA and Indecon has shown that there are gaps between what DSP employment programmes for people with disabilities offer and what for people with high support needs who want to work are provided with through the health system. Arising from these findings, Budget 2017 provides for a €2 million programme to fund pre-activation supports for people with disabilities.

While the procedures for the operation of this programme are currently being worked out, this will take into account the recommendations of a working group chaired by the NDA and comprising of the Departments of Education and Skills, Health and Social Protection, together with the HSE, which was established to develop an effective co-ordinated policy approach and interdepartmental protocols to assist individuals with disabilities, including those who require a high level of support, to obtain and retain employment. This working group is due to report by the end of the year with an implementation plan, which will assist in determining decisions relating to the provision of services of this nature at a national level.

## **Carer's Allowance Appeals**

367. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34421/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Carer's Allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are habitually resident in the State and are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has a disability such that they require that level of care.

Full-time care and attention 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.

I confirm that my department received applications for carer's allowance (CA) from the

person concerned on 13 June 2016 in respect of two care recipients.

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that the person concerned was not habitually resident in the State and that the evidence did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied in respect of one care recipient.

He was notified on 1 November 2016 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal.

To date, no request for a review or appeal has been received from the person concerned.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Departmental Funding**

368. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 328 of 18 October 2016, if he will clarify a matter raised by an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34439/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The organisation referred to in the Deputy's question is the Irish Association of Supported Employment (IASE).

The substantive issue raised by this organisation was addressed in the PQ reply of the 18th October last, to the effect that the Department of Social Protection does not have a programme that provides core funding to national community and voluntary bodies and so there are no outstanding applications for funding from this organisation.

The communication referred to by the Deputy was a request for a meeting with me which was received from the IASE on 27th June 2016 and which was duly acknowledged. Subsequent to that the organisation was contacted by my office and a formal written reply will issue shortly.

*Question No. 369 withdrawn.*

### **Carer's Allowance Eligibility**

370. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Social Protection the criteria that must be followed and the entitlements if carers becomes sick (details supplied), if they are allowed to be sick and receive their payment; and the length of time can they be sick before their allowance is affected. [34498/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Carer's Allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person whose care needs are such that they require from their carer 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 CA applicant must be capable of providing the necessary of care to the care recipient.

My department understands that, from time to time, acute and/or short-term illnesses may affect a carer's ability to provide full-time care and CA may continue in payment in these cir-

cumstances, unless another person takes over the caring duties and applies for CA or carer's benefit in their own right.

If the carer sustains a more serious and/or longer-term illness, injury or disease that limits their capacity to provide full-time care and attention and/or requires a temporary stay in an institution such as a hospital or convalescent home, payment of CA can continue up to a maximum of 13 weeks.

After 13 weeks, payment will stop if a deciding officer is satisfied that the carer is no longer providing full-time care and attention due to their incapacity.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

371. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34506/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I confirm that my Department received an application for disability allowance from this man on 4 October 2016. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

The processing time for individual disability allowance claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

372. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34507/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This lady submitted an application for disability allowance on 7 March 2016.

The application, based upon the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds and the person in question was notified in writing of this decision on 8 November 2016 and of her rights of review and appeal.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

373. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [34510/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath)**  
**(Deputy Finian McGrath):** I confirm that my Department received an application for disability allowance from this man on 5 September 2016. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

The processing time for individual disability allowance claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

374. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34513/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath)**  
**(Deputy Finian McGrath):** I can confirm that the Department is in receipt of an application for disability allowance (DA) from this man.

On 19 August 2016 the application was referred by a deciding officer (DO) to a social welfare investigative officer (SWI) for a report on the person's means and circumstances. The SWI has confirmed that a meeting is scheduled for 10 November 2016. Once the SWI has submitted his/her report to the DO, a decision will be made on the application and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance**

375. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a domiciliary care allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34514/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath)**  
**(Deputy Finian McGrath):** An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received in respect of this child on the 26th July 2016. The application was not allowed as it was considered that the child did not meet the eligibility criteria for the allowance. A letter issued on 9th November 2016 outlining the decision in this case.

In the case of an application which is refused, the applicant may submit additional information and ask to have the decision reviewed, and/or they may appeal the decision directly to the Social Welfare Appeals Office. The information and options have been advised in the decision letter.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Appeals**



376. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34515/16]

**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 by way of a summary decision. 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.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

377. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34517/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I confirm that an application from this man for disability allowance (DA) was received by my Department on 18 March 2016.

The application was referred to a Social Welfare Inspector (SWI) for a report on the person's means and circumstances. The SWI has confirmed that the investigation has been completed and is forwarding his report. Once the SWI has submitted his/her report to DA section, a decision will be made on the application and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

378. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34521/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This man submitted an application for disability allowance on 10 June 2016.

The application, based upon the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds and the person in question was notified in writing of this decision on 14 November 2016 and of his rights of review and appeal.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

379. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34522/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I confirm that my Department received an application for disability allowance from this lady on 26 September 2016. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

The processing time for individual disability allowance claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications**

380. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a domiciliary care in respect of a person (details supplied). [34523/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received in respect of this child on the 19th August 2016. This application has been forwarded to one of the Department's Medical Assessors for their medical opinion. Following receipt of this opinion, a decision will be made by a Deciding Officer and notified to the applicant. Applications are processed in date of receipt order. It can currently take 16 weeks to process an application for DCA.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance**

381. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will consider providing a basic payment of disability allowance level for persons who are diagnosed with cancer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34538/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** My Department provides a comprehensive suite of income supports, including illness benefit, invalidity pension, and disability allowance for those who are unable to work due to an illness or disability. Entitlement to these supports is not contingent on the nature of the illness but on the extent to which a particular illness or disability impairs or restricts a person's capacity to work. Therefore, there is no requirement to introduce a scheme where support is conditional on the nature of the illness as the existing schemes already cover all illnesses.

Hope that clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance**

382. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection when arrears will issue

to a person (details supplied) who is in receipt of a disability allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34569/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Following a successful appeal, this lady has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 24 February 2016. The first payment was made by her chosen payment method on 2 November 2016.

Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments or in respect of outstanding overpayments (if applicable).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Jobseeker's Allowance Payments**

383. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a weekly payment has been reduced in the case of a person (details supplied). [34570/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The person concerned is casually employed and is in receipt of jobseeker's allowance including an increase in respect of a child dependant. As her child dependant reached the age of 18, the qualified child allowance terminated with effect from 30 September 2016.

If the child dependant is continuing in further education, it is open to the person concerned to submit a letter from the education provider confirming that the child dependant is currently registered as a student and engaged in full-time education.

Additionally, the person concerned did not receive payment for the October bank holiday. If the person concerned is not eligible for payment by her employer for the October bank holiday, it is open to the person to submit a letter from their employer to the Maynooth office, confirming that no payment was received for the bank holiday and a payment will issue for that day.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Invalidity Pension Applications**

384. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for an invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34575/16]

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

The lady concerned was refused IP on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. She was notified on the 10 November 2016 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Invalidity Pension Applications**

385. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for an invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34576/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Having completed a period on partial capacity benefit, this gentleman has had his invalidity pension reinstated with effect from the 8 September 2016. He was notified of this decision on the 07 October 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Invalidity Pension Appeals**

386. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an appeal on an invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34577/16]

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

The Department received a claim for IP for the gentleman concerned on the 27 May 2016. He was refused IP on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on the 25 October 2016 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal.

He requested a review of this decision and submitted further medical evidence in support of his request. Following a review of all the information available the Deciding Officer is now satisfied that the medical conditions for the scheme are satisfied.

On the 08 June 2016 and 14 November 2016, a Deciding Officer requested that the gentleman concerned provide confirmation of his last date of employment. Upon receipt of same, the IP claim will be finalised and he will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Jobseeker's Allowance**

387. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection if non-union teachers on short-term contracts will be entitled to claim jobseeker's allowance while their schools are closed due to industrial action; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34600/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The jobseeker's allowance scheme provides income support for people who have lost work and are unable to find alternative full-time employment. The 2016 Estimates for my Department provide for expenditure this year on the jobseeker's allowance scheme of approximately €2.45 billion.

It is open to any individual to make a claim for jobseeker's allowance at any time. However, jobseeker's allowance payments compensate for periods of involuntary unemployment only.

For this reason social welfare legislation provides that a person must satisfy certain conditions in order to be entitled to jobseeker's allowance. The qualifying conditions for receipt of jobseeker's allowance require a person to be unemployed, available for and genuinely seeking full-time employment. Where a teacher is on a short term contract, in full-time employment they would not satisfy the conditionality of being unemployed, available for and genuinely seeking work and therefore would not qualify for jobseeker's allowance when they are in remunerative employment.

Where these individuals are unable to work as their schools are closed due to industrial action, it is a matter for the Department of Education and Skills in the first instance to determine whether these individuals will continue to be paid. If they are not participating in the industrial action and do not receive payment, they may be eligible for a jobseeker's payment provided they satisfy the eligibility criteria. However, each case would be decided on a case by case basis and dependent on its individual merits. It should be noted that if an individual is awarded a jobseeker's payment they will not be paid for their first three days of their jobseeker's claim.

### **Social Welfare Eligibility**

388. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the financial supports available for self-employed persons who have temporarily stopped working due to illness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34656/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Self-employed persons, who earn €5,000 or more in a contribution year, are liable for PRSI at the Class S rate of 4%, subject to a minimum annual payment of €500. This provides them with access to long-term benefits including State pension (contributory), Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Pension (contributory), Guardian's Payment (contributory) as well as Maternity Benefit and Adoptive Benefit. Since September 2016, self-employed workers can also access the newly introduced Paternity Benefit.

Self-employed workers who have to temporarily stop working because of illness can apply for the supplementary welfare allowance scheme. This is a means tested payment for people whose means are insufficient to meet their needs including the needs of a spouse/partner or qualified children.

In line with the commitment contained in the Programme for Government for an improved PRSI scheme for the self-employed, as part of Budget 2017 I announced the extension of cover for Invalidity Pension to the self-employed on the same basis as employees, with effect from December 2017. Invalidity Pension is a pension payment for people who cannot work because of a long-term illness or disability. Gaining access to Invalidity Pension will provide the self-employed with a much stronger safety net to protect them in the event of significant injury or disablement.

In addition, the self-employed will have access to the Treatment Benefit Scheme which provides partial dental, optical and aural services to qualified people, from March 2017. Treatment Benefit entitlements will be extended further from October 2017 for both the self-employed and employees, providing additional dental and optical benefits.

I hope this provides some clarity on the issue for the Deputy, if you require any further information contact Philip in my office.

## State Pension (Contributory)

389. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress which has been made on the 2010 national pensions framework proposals for the introduction of a total contributions approach to State pension (contributory) to replace the current averaging system from 2020; and if persons will have the option in the future to continue in employment beyond pension age to make up contribution shortfalls or defer drawing down their pension to enable them to receive an actuarially increased pension when they decide to retire (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34762/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The rate of payment for a recipient of the State pension contributory scheme is related to contributions made over the years into the Social Insurance Fund by the person concerned. As such, those with a stronger attachment to the workforce, and who have paid more into that fund, are more likely to be paid under this scheme. Under the scheme, entitlement is calculated by means of a ‘yearly average’ calculation, where the total contributions paid or credited are divided by the number of years of the working life. Payment rates are banded. For example, someone with a yearly average of 48 contributions will qualify for a full pension, whereas someone with a yearly average of 20 will qualify for a pension at 85% of the full rate. Where someone does not qualify for a full rate contributory pension, they may qualify for an alternative payment. 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), which amounts to 95% of the maximum contributory pension rate.

The National Pensions Framework (2010) proposed that a “Total Contribution Approach” (TCA) should replace the yearly average approach, for new pensioners from 2020. The aim of this approach is to make the rate of contributory pension more closely match contributions made by a person. Officials of my Department are currently working on the detailed development of the TCA with a view to making proposals for consideration in the first half of the New Year. It’s worth noting that this is a very significant reform with considerable legal, administrative, and technical elements in its implementation. An important element in the final design of the scheme will be the position of people who have gaps in their contribution records for various reasons, and this factor is being considered very carefully in developing this reform.

The Deputy should note that a pensioner can already claim a State pension contributory and continue in employment. In developing the TCA my officials are also examining flexibility options in both contributing to and drawing down State pension contributory. These include deferment of pension and/or payment of further reckonable PRSI contributions after State pension age. Decisions on whether and how to include these options will depend on a balance between costs, benefits for pensioners, demand for the options and practicality of administration.

It is important that the changes are announced well in advance of introduction, to enable those affected to include the new factors into their retirement planning.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

## JobPath Implementation

390. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons, by county, that have had their payments reduced or ceased as a result of failure to comply with the requirements of the JobPath scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter.



[34816/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** All jobseekers are required to engage with the Department's activation service and this obligation applies irrespective of whether the service is provided by the Department's own case officers or those employed by the Local Employment Service or by JobPath.

In order to qualify for a jobseeker payment, a person must meet certain conditions, including the requirement to be available for, capable of and genuinely seeking full-time work. A range of sanctions, including disqualification, closure or disallowance of the jobseeker claim, may be imposed where a client fails to meet the stated conditions. A jobseeker claim may be reviewed at any time in order to establish continued entitlement.

Additionally, in relation to activation, legislation provides that further sanctions/penalties in the form of reduced payments may be imposed by a Deciding Officer where clients fail, without good cause, to comply with activation measures. Activation measures include the requirement to attend group or individual meetings with case officers and/or avail of suitable education, training or development opportunities, or specified employment programmes, which are considered appropriate to a person's circumstances.

Where a person continues to fail, without good cause, to comply with activation measures, while on a penalty rate, he/she may be disqualified from receiving the personal rate of payment. The normal rate of payment may be reinstated at any time, if the jobseeker complies, as requested, with activation measures.

All decisions regarding the application of penalty rates are taken by officials of the Department. Some 1,500 people who were referred to the JobPath service since its inception have had a penalty rate applied to them. Of these there are at present c500 people on a reduced penalty rate of payment. A breakdown by county is not currently available but will be provided to the Deputy as soon as possible.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Community Employment Schemes Review**

391. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the review of Tús and CE schemes; when this review will be completed; the new schemes that will be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34909/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Tús and CE are employment programmes that aim to help people who are long-term unemployed to re-enter the workforce. They break the cycle of unemployment by providing a return to a regular work routine, thereby improving a person's chances of returning to the open labour market. CE also provides training to participants. My Department is very conscious of the valuable contribution these schemes make, both in improving the employment prospects of participants and in providing services to individuals and communities across Ireland.

With the ongoing welcome reductions in the live register in recent months, a number of issues around employment schemes, including Tús and CE, are being considered. These include the number of employment schemes, the level of expenditure, the number of places and the criteria for participation.

A review of CE schemes has taken place. I met with my officials to discuss the outcomes of

this review. I hope to be in a position to bring a Memorandum to Government on these matters in the coming weeks. If there are any changes to be made consultations with stakeholders will be facilitated.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Jobseeker's Allowance Data

392. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons under 26 years of age who are currently in receipt of the €100, €144 and €188 rate, of jobseeker's allowance in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34917/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the following tabular statement.

| Recipients of Jobseeker's Allowance under the age of 26 on €100, €144 and €188 at the end of October 2016 (excluding cases where payment is suspended) |        |       |       |             |
|--|--------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Age  | €100   | €144  | €188  | Grand Total |
| 18   | 2,225  | 2     | 81    | 2,308       |
| 19   | 3,171  | 3     | 236   | 3,410       |
| 20   | 3,103  | 4     | 354   | 3,461       |
| 21   | 3,048  | 6     | 473   | 3,527       |
| 22   | 2,937  | 23    | 578   | 3,538       |
| 23   | 2,865  | 29    | 679   | 3,573       |
| 24   | 2,483  | 392   | 887   | 3,762       |
| 25   | 4      | 2,732 | 1,860 | 4,596       |
| Grand Total  | 19,836 | 3,191 | 5,148 | 28,175      |

### Social Welfare Schemes Data

393. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons under 26 years of age who are in receipt of jobseeker's benefit, jobseeker's allowance or signing on for credits for less than six months, for six to 12 months, for 12 to 24 months, for 24 to 36 months, for 36 to 48 months and for more than 48 months in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34918/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Recipients under 26 as at end October 2016.

| Recipients             | <6mths | 6-12mths | 1-2yrs | 2-3yrs | 3-4yrs | >4yrs | Total  |
|------------------------|--------|----------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| JOB-SEEKER'S ALLOWANCE | 11,538 | 4,927    | 5,973  | 2,969  | 1,807  | 2,716 | 29,930 |
| CREDITS                | 114    | 50       | 36     | 13     | 5      | 4     | 222    |

Questions - Written Answers

| Recipients           | <6mths | 6-12mths | 1-2yrs | 2-3yrs | 3-4yrs | >4yrs | Total  |
|----------------------|--------|----------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| JOB-SEEKER'S BENEFIT | 1,716  | 202      | 34     | 2      | 0      | 0     | 1,954  |
| Sum:                 | 13,368 | 5,179    | 6,043  | 2,984  | 1,812  | 2,720 | 32,106 |

**Social Welfare Schemes Data**

394. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons under 26 years of age in receipt of jobseeker's allowance, jobseeker's benefit and signing on for credits on a county basis in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34919/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the following tabular statement.

| County    | JB Credits Only | Jobseekers Benefit | Jobseekers Allowance | County Total |
|-----------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Carlow    | 2               | 22                 | 648                  | 672          |
| Cavan     | 3               | 29                 | 609                  | 641          |
| Clare     | 2               | 46                 | 673                  | 721          |
| Cork      | 22              | 154                | 2,198                | 2,374        |
| Donegal   | 9               | 82                 | 1,692                | 1,783        |
| Dublin    | 61              | 595                | 7,125                | 7,781        |
| Galway    | 7               | 114                | 1,306                | 1,427        |
| Kerry     | 11              | 73                 | 859                  | 943          |
| Kilkenny  | -               | 7                  | 76                   | 83           |
| Kildare   | 13              | 94                 | 1,225                | 1,332        |
| Kilkenny  | 1               | 14                 | 368                  | 383          |
| Laois     | 4               | 31                 | 746                  | 781          |
| Leitrim   | 3               | 22                 | 240                  | 265          |
| Limerick  | 2               | 58                 | 1,351                | 1,411        |
| Longford  | 5               | 23                 | 460                  | 488          |
| Louth     | 4               | 53                 | 1,370                | 1,427        |
| Mayo      | 3               | 46                 | 869                  | 918          |
| Meath     | 5               | 47                 | 668                  | 720          |
| Monaghan  | 3               | 24                 | 296                  | 323          |
| Offaly    | 6               | 44                 | 824                  | 874          |
| Roscommon | 3               | 16                 | 305                  | 324          |
| Sligo     | -               | 28                 | 407                  | 435          |
| Tipperary | 16              | 69                 | 1,429                | 1,514        |
| Waterford | 10              | 62                 | 982                  | 1,054        |
| Westmeath | 4               | 55                 | 922                  | 981          |
| Wexford   | 10              | 87                 | 1,439                | 1,536        |

| County      | JB Credits Only | Jobseekers Benefit | Jobseekers Allowance | County Total |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Wicklow     | 13              | 59                 | 843                  | 915          |
| Grand Total | 222             | 1,954              | 29,930               | 32,106       |

### Disability Allowance Data

395. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons under 26 years of age who are currently in receipt of the disability allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34920/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As at end October 2016, there were 16,941 people under the age of 26 in receipt of Disability Allowance.

### One-Parent Family Payment Data

396. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons under 26 years of age who are currently in receipt of the one-parent family payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34921/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** At the end of October 2016, there were 9,828 recipients of One Parent Family Payment under 26 years of age.

### Labour Activation Projects

397. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons under 26 years of age who have been referred to Seetec under the JobPath initiative since its introduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34922/16]

398. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons under 26 years of age who have been referred to Turas Nua under the JobPath initiative since its introduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34923/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 397 and 398 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, JobPath is an employment activation service that supports people who are long-term unemployed and those most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed to secure and sustain paid employment.

Some 6,500 jobseekers under 26 years of age are being supported by the JobPath service and of these c. 3,000 are with Seetec and c. 3,500 are with Turas Nua.

Participants on JobPath receive intensive individual support to help them tackle barriers to employment and to assist them in finding jobs. Each person is assigned to a personal adviser who assesses a person's skills, experience, challenges and work goals. The personal adviser works with the jobseeker to agree a personal progression plan that includes a schedule of activities, actions and job focused targets. Participants are provided with a range of training and development supports directly and via online modules. These include such things as confidence building, career advice, CV preparation and interview skills. Participants may also be referred to external training providers including Education and Training Boards.

Participants receive the JobPath service for a period of 12 months (which can be extended by up to six months to facilitate the jobseeker completing training programmes) or until such time as they find employment whichever is the sooner. If the jobseeker secures employment during this period they can continue to receive support for at least three months and up to twelve months while in employment.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Back to Education Allowance Payments**

399. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection when the new rate for the back to education allowance of €193 per week for young persons under 26 years of age announced in budget 2017 will commence and be paid to recipients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34924/16]

400. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the new rate for the back to education allowance, BTEA, of €193 per week for young persons under 26 years of age will apply to all BTEA participants, irrespective of when they commenced the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34925/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 399 and 400 together.

While the Social Welfare Bill 2016 has been published, until such time as it is enacted no changes will be made to increases in weekly welfare rates. Subject to enactment, all BTEA increases will come into effect in March 2017.

Rate increases will be payable to applicable BTEA participants, irrespective of their commencement date on the scheme.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Jobseeker's Allowance**

401. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons on the reduced rate of jobseeker's allowance who will benefit from the decision in budget 2017 to reduce their contribution towards rent supplement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34926/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Rent supplement plays a vital role in housing families and individuals, with the scheme currently supporting some 49,700 recipients for which the Government has provided €267 million for in 2016.

The information requested by the Deputy is not collated by the Department but I am advised that the number of young persons on reduced rate of jobseekers allowance who receive rent supplement support is approximately 500 in total. The measure, which I announced as part of Budget 2017, effectively increases these young people's after-rent income whilst on age-related social welfare payments by reducing their minimum contribution under rent supplement. For single persons under 25 years they will be €20 better off per week – paying a minimum contribution of €10 per week rather than the current €30, and for persons over 25 and under 26 they will be €10 better off per week, paying a minimum contribution of €20 per week.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **National Internship Scheme Data**

402. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will provide a breakdown of all the costs associated with the commissioning, production and launch of the evaluation of the JobBridge activation programme published in October 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34927/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** A commitment was given in Pathways to Work 2015 to develop and implement a robust evaluation programme to assess the impact of Pathways to Work initiatives and identify potential areas for future attention.

A formal Request for Tender for the Design and Implementation of an Evaluation of the Suitability, Effectiveness and Relevance of the JobBridge Activation Programme was issued via eTenders and OJEU. Following the assessment of tenders, the contract for the external evaluation was awarded to Indecon International Economic Consultants in association with London Economics for a total fixed price of €109,671 exclusive of taxes and VAT.

Costs incurred in relation to the launch of the report amounted to €250.

Total costs associated with the commissioning, production and launch of the evaluation, therefore, amounted to €109,921.

### **Family Income Supplement Applications**

403. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for the family income supplement in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34941/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an initial review of this appeal indicated that an oral hearing might be helpful. However, having had an opportunity to examine the case more closely the Appeals Officer concluded that an oral hearing is not required.

The Appeals Officer having fully considered all of the available evidence, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. 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.

### **Back to Work Allowance Applications**

404. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an application for a back to enterprise allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) will be reopened and re-examined with particular reference to their eligibility and to the fact that their business is now open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34951/16]



**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The business proposal of the person concerned was for a franchise operation and she discussed the proposal with a case officer who advised her that she considered that the proposal did not meet the eligibility criteria for the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA). The proposal involved considerable financial exposure for the person concerned and the case officer advised that she was of the view that it was unlikely to succeed.

The person concerned was advised that she could apply for jobseekers allowance and there is a claim pending in Galway Intreo Centre.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

405. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Social Protection the criteria in relation to entitlements and social protection payments when a person resides outside the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34957/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Department of Social Protection operates a wide range of schemes and the criteria for paying these outside the State vary according to a number of factors such as the duration of absence from the state, whether it's a contributory or non-contributory payment, nationality (EU v Non EU) and the other conditions of payment, such as whether the person is required to be available for work.

As the circumstances of each case vary so much, it would be impossible to cover all eventualities in this answer. However any customer considering going abroad should contact the area of the Department paying them for more detailed information specific to their case. Contact details for all Department of Social Protection schemes may be found at [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie).

### Social Welfare Fraud

406. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Social Protection the procedures in place to identify welfare fraud; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34958/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The majority of people in receipt of a payment from the Department of Social Protection receive what they are entitled to under the Social Welfare and Pensions Acts. Nevertheless, the Department recognises that abuse of the welfare system is an ongoing reality and must be tackled through a range of measures. These measures are governed by the Department's Compliance and Anti-Fraud Strategy 2014 – 2018. The actions set out in the strategy are designed to prevent and detect fraud, to ensure effective oversight of schemes, to pursue prosecution of offenders and to ensure the recovery of any overpaid entitlements identified.

All Departmental staff exercise a control and compliance function in processing new applications and reviewing existing entitlements. The systems used to support schemes are designed to detect wrongful claiming and to highlight anomalies. In addition, the Department's inspectorate undertakes detailed examination of claims on a risk assessed and random basis. In addition, at least three fraud and error surveys of Departmental schemes are conducted annually to assess the quality of claim processing and fraud detection. These surveys are published and subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General and their findings are used to tighten control measures around schemes, where this is found to be warranted.

My Department's Special Investigation Unit comprises trained inspector and Garda officers and is tasked with undertaking targeted and systematic examination of claims to tackle fraud and to work with other enforcement agencies to identify more serious breaches of the law.

Cross-functional and targeted actions are undertaken - both internally and in joint operations with other national and international agencies - to ensure a strategic response to high risk sectors or where fraud is prevalent. In particular, actions are focused on sectors of the economy where there is a risk of concurrent working and claiming social welfare payments.

Overall, the Department conducts of the order of one million reviews annually comprising customer entitlement reviews, inspections and special investigations.

The Deputy should also note that the continued roll-out of the Public Services Card has considerably reduced the potential for identity fraud and the Department has deployed identity and analytics software and other intelligence systems to reinforce its fraud prevention work.

Members of the public play an important role in supporting these anti-fraud activities and some 17,000 reports from concerned citizens have been processed already in 2016.

The Compliance and Anti-Fraud Strategy 2014 – 2018 and annual updates on progress are published on the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie).

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Overpayments**

407. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will examine the case of a person (details supplied); if he will request his officials to take a sympathetic approach, as in all probability a genuine mistake was made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34984/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Illness benefit is a payment to persons who are unable to work due to illness and who satisfy certain statutory PRSI contribution conditions.

Partial capacity benefit (PCB) is a scheme where a person who has been in receipt of the benefit for at least six months and who may have some capacity for employment may apply to take up work while still receiving payment. Written approval from my department must be obtained before taking up the employment. The person concerned was notified of this conditionality on the PCB application form and by means of form SW132 which issued in April 2015.

It came to attention that the person concerned was in receipt of illness benefit during the period from 15 April 2016 to 4 October 2016 while in employment. Approval for PCB had not been given. The claim to illness benefit was disallowed for this period resulting in an overpayment. There is a right of appeal to the independent Appeals Office on the decision.

As regards the method of recovery of an overpayment a person can have their circumstances taken into account and re-payment can be made by regular instalments.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

### **Illness Benefit Applications**

408. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for an illness benefit allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35003/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The lady referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from the 5 May 2016. Payment will issue to her nominated bank account on the 1 December 2016. Any arrears due from 5 May 2016 to 30 November 2016 (less any overlapping social welfare payment and-or outstanding overpayment) will issue in due course. The lady in question was notified of this decision on the 14 November 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

409. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an appeal of an application for a carer's allowance in respect a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35004/16]

**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 11 November 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.

### **Rent Supplement Scheme Payments**

410. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent to which rent has been paid in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35011/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Department has not, to date, received an application for Rent Supplement from the clients concerned. The clients should provide same to the Mid-Leinster Rent Unit, PO Box 11758, Dublin 24, to be assessed for entitlement to Rent Supplement.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility**

411. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the correct level of payment in the case of a person (details supplied); if the case will be urgently reviewed with particular reference to the hardship being caused; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35151/16]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The person concerned is current-

ly in receipt of Jobseekers Transition payment. This is a means tested scheme. The calculation of means is based on a Social Welfare Inspector's report.

The person concerned has appealed the decision of the Inspector and has submitted further evidence in support of her appeal, which the Inspector is now considering.

If there is no change to the Inspector decision, the file will be forwarded to the Social Welfare Appeals Office for a further review.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Foreign Conflicts**

412. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he is aware that 11 MPs from the People's Democratic Party, HDP, and the party's two co-chairs, were recently arrested in Turkey; his views on the dramatic escalation in the crackdown on democratic politics and civic society in Turkey; and if he will urgently raise his concern over these arrests with his Turkish counterpart. [34443/16]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am gravely concerned about the most recent developments in Turkey, in particular the detention of the co-chairs of Turkey's second largest opposition party, HDP, and several of its elected representatives on 4 November, which was made possible by the lifting of parliamentary immunity from some 130 MPs last May. I issued a statement on 4 November, in which I expressed Ireland's concern at the arrests and also at the intensification of the media crackdown, and I emphasised the need to uphold the fundamental principles of democracy, human rights and rule of law. My officials communicated the statement to the Turkish embassy.

While I have acknowledged that the failed coup was both an unacceptable attempt to undermine democracy and a traumatic shock for the people of Turkey, the Turkish authorities must exercise restraint and maintain a proportionate and measured response.

In addition, Ireland's concerns are fully reflected in the EU statement issued on 8 November, in which the EU expresses its deep concern at recent developments in Turkey, in particular, the continued restrictions on freedom of expression, including media freedom, the closure of more media outlets and the arrests of the editor-in-chief and several staff members of the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper; renewed suggestions of reinstating the death penalty; the exacerbation of existing tensions in the south-east; and the arrests of HDP MPs. The EU statement recalls that it is crucial that parliamentary immunity is applied to all democratically elected representatives on a non-discriminatory basis.

Furthermore, developments in Turkey were discussed in the meeting of Ministers' Deputies at the Council of Europe on 9 November, at which Turkey was represented. Ireland's representative expressed our concern at the current situation in Turkey, and recalled that rule of law, human rights, democracy and freedom of expression are core Council of Europe values. Turkey was also discussed at the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 14 November, where Minister of State Dara Murphy represented Ireland.

### **Foreign Conflicts**

413. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the details of the discussions he has had with other EU leaders on the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean,

the war in Syria and the deployment of Irish Naval Service vessels to the Mediterranean Sea. [32798/16]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The migration crisis remains a key priority for the European Union and it has been discussed many times in various Council formations. Last month, migration was discussed at the European Council, the Foreign Affairs Council (which I attended) and the Justice and Home Affairs Council. Migration is again on the agenda of the December European Council. I have also discussed the crisis in bilateral meetings with a range of Foreign Minister colleagues.

As regards the situation in Syria, I discussed the conflict with my EU colleagues at the Foreign Affairs Council on Monday 17 October. We were joined by UN Special Envoy Steffan de Mistura. The Council adopted conclusions condemning atrocities in Syria, and in Aleppo in particular; called for an immediate end to the bombardment of Aleppo and the protection of civilian populations across Syria; ending restrictions on the provision of humanitarian assistance and the lifting of all sieges; reaffirmed the EU's support for a political resolution to the conflict in Syria; condemned the illegal use of chemical weapons by the regime and Daesh and called for accountability through referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court; and condemned the actions of Daesh.

The men and women of our naval service have played an outstanding role in humanitarian operations in the Mediterranean. Working in close cooperation with their Italian colleagues they have rescued over 14,700 people. Following a Government Decision in May 2015, the L.É. Eithne, was deployed to the Mediterranean on 16 May, 2015, to assist the Italian Authorities with the migrant crisis. Two further vessels were deployed during 2015. This year, there have been three naval vessels deployed to the Mediterranean.

I have discussed our naval operations in the Mediterranean with my Italian opposite number, including during his visit to Dublin in July.

### **Foreign Conflicts**

414. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the efforts he is making to stop the appalling slaughter of innocent civilians in Aleppo, Syria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35141/16]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I utterly condemn the actions by the Assad regime and its allies, including Russia, in Aleppo, and demand the immediate end to the bombardment of that city and the lifting of all restrictions on humanitarian assistance in Aleppo and across Syria.

I discussed the Syrian conflict with my EU colleagues at the Foreign Affairs Council on Monday 17 October. We were joined by UN Special Envoy Steffan de Mistura. The Council adopted conclusions condemning atrocities in Syria, and in Aleppo in particular; calling for an immediate end to the bombardment of Aleppo and the protection of civilian populations across Syria; calling for an end to restrictions on the provision of humanitarian assistance and the lifting of all sieges; reaffirming the EU's support for a political resolution to the conflict in Syria; condemning the illegal use of chemical weapons by the regime and Daesh; calling for accountability through referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court; and condemning the actions of Daesh.

I met the Russian Ambassador last month to convey my grave concerns at the appalling events in Syria and Aleppo in particular. During the meeting, I urged that Russia use all its influ-

ence to end the bombardment of Aleppo and make every effort to ensure that civilians in Syria are granted full protection of their rights. I asked Ambassador Peshkov to relay these concerns to his authorities in Moscow.

In addition, senior officials in my Department met with the Ambassador, at my direction, on two occasions to convey to him in the clearest terms Ireland's serious concerns over the horrific situation in Syria.

I had an opportunity to discuss the Syrian conflict during my meeting with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on 30 October. I also discussed efforts to renew the political process during my recent trip to the Gulf where I met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and the Deputy Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Dr. Nizar bin Obaid Al Madani.

### **Intestate Estates**

415. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the value of assets transferred to the State in each of the past three years as a result of persons dying without having made a will and there is no relative to whom these assets can be transferred; the mechanisms the State has in place to ensure these assets are received; the estimated value of assets yet to be transferred to the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34551/16]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The following amounts have transferred to the State in respect of persons who have died intestate without next of kin in each of the past three years:

- 2013 - €763,830
- 2014 - €1,403,733
- 2015 - €326,233

Where next of kin come forward, the State is no longer entitled to the estate and the entitlement to the benefit of the estate it is passed to the next of kin. The Minister is also entitled to waive an Estate or part of an estate where, following an application, it is considered that such a waiver is appropriate. In these circumstance the value of the estate in question may be reimbursed from the Intestate Estate Funds Deposit Account.

The State is the Ultimate Intestate Successor in Ireland, therefore where the State becomes aware of estates of persons who die intestate with no known next of kin, the State will take the Estate. The assets in such cases are collected by the Chief State Solicitors Office (CSSO) and, following payment of any liabilities, the proceeds are then transferred to the Minister of Public Expenditure and Reform in whom the Estate vests. These proceeds are lodged to the intestate estate funds deposit account.

The current value of assets yet to transfer to the State is unknown. However, the amount transferred to date for 2016 is €415,673.

### **Heritage Projects**

416. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the restoration of a bridge (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.



[34803/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney):** When it was taken into care, Ardara Bridge was in very poor condition, mainly attributable to external factors such as the affects of the river course and tree growth. Since 2007 considerable conservation work has been undertaken, primarily to save the bridge from collapse. The project has been separated into a number of sub-projects which ensures that the necessary resources are in place to complete each individual task. The project has been technically very complex and hampered by the extremely fragile nature of the structure. Over a number of seasons, poor weather has affected progress resulting in high water levels in the river (making conditions for workers hazardous). By June 2015, works had progressed to a stage where specialist expertise was required, focussing on a more long-term geo-technical design solution which recognises the vulnerability of the structure into the future. The necessary specialist expertise was engaged and the investigation has been completed. Informed by this, a number of design proposals have been developed and the process of selecting the most preferred option is currently under way.

### **Superannuation Schemes**

417. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of applications that have been refused for injury warrants under the Superannuation Acts since 1995; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34419/16]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** While the award of injury warrants under the Superannuation Acts is ultimately decided by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and the cost is a charge on the Superannuation Vote, the process is always initiated in the officer's parent Department; accordingly the records with respect to rejected claims are maintained by each individual Department.

### **Statute Law Revision Programme**

418. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will commit to funding the statute law revision programme after the enactment of the Statute Law Revision Bill 2016; his views on whether, in the context of Brexit, it is important that Ireland, which may be the only remaining common law country in the EU, delete from its Statute Book unnecessary and archaic laws; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34466/16]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Statute Law Revision Programme was initiated in 2003. It formerly operated within the auspices of the Office of the Attorney General and is now contained within the Government Reform Unit of my Department. Its purpose is to modernise and simplify the Statute book by removing spent and obsolete pieces of legislation, thereby reducing its size and thus making it more understandable and accessible to those who use it. There has been a particular need for such revision in Ireland because our unique legislative past has left us with a complex stock of legislation, with enactments from the Parliaments of Ireland, England, Great Britain and the United Kingdom as well as our own Oireachtas.

To date, the Oireachtas has passed five Statute Law Revision Acts as follows:

- The Statute Law Revision (Pre-1922) Act 2005, which repealed a selection of pre-1922 statutes;

- The Statute Law Revision Act 2007, which was a comprehensive revision of pre-1922 Public General Acts;

- The Statute Law Revision Act 2009, which revised all Private Acts up to and including 1750 and all Local and Personal Acts up to and including 1850;

- The Statute Law Revision Act 2012, which revised all Private Acts from 1750 to 1922 and all Local and Personal Acts from 1850 to 1922; and

- The Statute Law Revision Act 2015, which revoked Secondary Instruments made before 1 January 1821.

A sixth Statute Law Revision Bill, covering primary legislation enacted between 1922 and 1950, is currently progressing through the Houses.

The progress we have made with the Statute Law Revision Programme has been considerable. To date, over 60,000 pieces of legislation have been either expressly or implicitly repealed under the programme. Collectively this is the most extensive set of repealing measures in the history of the State and the most extensive set of statute law revision measures ever enacted anywhere in the world. I propose, however, in view of the progress made, to pause the Statute Law Revision Programme at this time in order that my Department can progress other priorities.

Common law will continue to constitute the basis of the legal system of Ireland and neither the Statute Law Revision Programme nor Brexit have any bearing on this. Ireland has functioned successfully as a common law country within the EU since it joined in 1973 and I see no reason why this should not continue.

### **Sports Facilities Provision**

419. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will review a matter in respect of an athletics club (details supplied); the action the club can take in the first instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34474/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney):** I am advised by the Commissioners of Public Works that the site at Farnham Road, Cavan is to be developed for State usage and therefore it will not be possible to facilitate Cavan Athletics Club.

### **Community Employment Schemes Supervisors**

420. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will honour the labour court recommendation CR19293 to community employment supervisors and move immediately to implement this finding and put in place a pension and ex gratia scheme for community employment supervisors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34542/16]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I refer the Deputy to my answer to Parliamentary Question Ref: 33868/16 on the 8th of November 2016 which sets out the position on the matter.

*Questions - Written Answers*  
**Referendum Expenditure**

421. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total cost of each referendum held in the State since 2000, in tabular form. [34571/16]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** There was no Referendum in 2000. The approximate costings for all referendums since 2001 are set out in the table below with the exception of those held in 2004 and 2011\*. The referendums in those years were not taken on their own but were combined and accounted for with European and Local Elections in 2004 and with a Presidential and by-election in 2011. It is not, therefore, possible to give an accurate cost of those referendums as there would have been an extensive sharing of staff and facilities for the different polls taken.

| Month/ Year   | Referendum  | Approximate Cost |
|---------------|---|------------------|
| June 2001     | Prohibition of Death Penalty  | €11.1m           |
|               | International Criminal Court  |                  |
|               | Treaty of Nice  |                  |
| March 2002    | Protection of Human Life in Pregnancy   | €10.8m           |
| October 2002  | Treaty of Nice  | €15.0m           |
| June 2004     | Citizenship   | *                |
| June 2008     | Treaty of Lisbon  | €22.2m           |
| October 2009  | Treaty of Lisbon  | €17.5m           |
| October 2011  | Houses of Oireachtas Enquiries  | *                |
|               | Judges Remuneration   |                  |
| May 2012      | Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union | €14.8m           |
| November 2012 | Children  | €12.8m           |
| October 2013  | Abolition of Seanad, Court of Appeal  | €14.4m           |
| May 2015      | Marriage Equality Bill & Age of Eligibility for Election to Office of the President | €15m             |

**Election Expenditure**

422. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total cost of each by-election held from 2010 to date in 2016 in tabular form. [34572/16]

423. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total cost of each recount in any by-election held from 2010 to 2016 in tabular form. [34573/16]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 422 and 423 together.

The approximate costings for all by-elections since 2010 are set out in the table below. Four of the by-elections were held on the same day as another Election or Referendum and therefore the by-election costs reflect savings from a sharing of people and facilities (these are marked with an asterisk in the table) i.e. the Dublin West by-election was held with the Presidential Election in 2011; the Dublin West and Longford-Westmeath by-elections were both held with the 2014 European and Local Elections; the Carlow-Kilkenny by-election was held with the 2015 Referendums on the Marriage Equality Bill and the Age for Presidency. As a result of changes to the free postage arrangements for candidates (whereby one item of election mate-

rial was sent to each household in the constituency rather than to each person on the Electoral Register, where possible), there were also additional savings in costs for the 2014 by-elections in Dublin West, Longford-Westmeath, Dublin South-West and Roscommon-South Leitrim and also for the 2015 Carlow-Kilkenny by-election.

There were no recount costs with respect to the by-elections as follows.

| Month/Year     | By-Election             | Approximate Cost |
|----------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| November, 2010 | Donegal South-West      | €0.514m          |
| February, 2011 | Dublin West             | €0.424m*         |
| March, 2013    | Meath East              | €0.473m          |
| May, 2014      | Dublin West             | €0.303m*         |
| May, 2014      | Longford Westmeath      | €0.397m *        |
| October, 2014  | Dublin South-West       | €0.547m          |
| October, 2014  | Roscommon-South Leitrim | €0.564m          |
| October, 2014  | Seanad By-Election      | €0.007m          |
| May, 2015      | Carlow-Kilkenny         | €0.501*          |
| November, 2015 | Seanad By-Election      | €0.007m          |

### Election Expenditure

424. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total cost of the general election held in February 2016 in tabular form. [34574/16]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The approximate cost of the General Election 2016 is €26.8m. This figure relates mainly to Returning Officer costs for the conduct of the poll and count, reimbursement of candidate expenses and also postal expenditure for the delivery of candidate election material and polling cards.

### Flood Risk Management

425. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his proposals to relocate families resident in flood prone areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34584/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney):** Last Tuesday, 8th November I announced a fund of €2m for a targeted humanitarian aid scheme for those primary residential properties that flooded during last Winter and had flooded in previous years to ensure those worst affected homeowners have a primary residence.

While the Government has agreed that the terms of funding for relocation will be in line with the previous scheme in 2009; I am to apprise Government of the ongoing review of the administrative arrangements from that earlier scheme, to ensure that the arrangements for this once-off scheme are reflective of its targeted objective and all relevant circumstances.

I want to ensure that the funding is targeted at those homeowners at greatest risk of future flooding and would gain greatest benefit from State support to relocate.

The Office of Public Works is working jointly with Local Authorities and the Department of Social Protection to identify and prioritise homeowners and review the administrative arrangements for this scheme. I hope to be able to apprise Government and subsequently make initial

contact with a small number of targeted homeowners towards the end of this year.

### Budget Measures

426. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the way the €310 million of additional expenditure in 2016, as reflected in the expenditure report 2017, to cover the Christmas bonus, school building programme and flood repairs is accounted for under the fiscal rules; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34612/16]

427. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if Dáil Éireann will vote on Supplementary Estimates to account for the additional €310 million added to the expenditure baseline to fund the Christmas bonus and increased capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34613/16]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 426 and 427 together.

As the Deputy has indicated, additional expenditure of €310 million was included for 2016 in the *Expenditure Report 2017* published on Budget day. This amount reflects an additional €200 million of capital funding for necessary repair work to transport infrastructure arising from flood damage at the start of the year and payments for school building works. This was signalled in the Mid-Year Expenditure Report 2016. Separately, a further €110 million is provided for current expenditure. This amount reflects the estimated cost of €220 million relating to a Christmas Bonus for long-term Social Welfare recipients, net of anticipated offsetting year-end savings across a number of Departments. As outlined on pages 28 and 31 in the *Expenditure Report 2017*, the extent of any required supplementary estimate to make provision for the Christmas bonus and capital expenditure will be determined later in the year in accordance with normal procedures and practice. As the Deputy will be aware, Supplementary Estimates are an important feature of the management of a cash based accounting system, amounting to some €56 billion in 2016. In this context, Supplementary Estimates play an important role in achieving a proper alignment of funding allocations with planned expenditure that is subject to approval by the Dáil.

The additional amounts in 2016 are projected to be aligned with the requirements of the Preventive Arm of the Stability and Growth Pact. Compliance for 2016 will be formally assessed when the Stability Programme Update is submitted to the European Commission in April 2017.

### Coastal Protection

428. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when he will make a determination on the application of Wexford County Council to co-fund coastal protection works at Rosslare Warren Middle, County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34684/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney):** I am advised by the Commissioners of Public Works that an application for funding under the Office of Public Works' (OPW) Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme has been received from Wexford County Council for a project at the location in question. This application is currently under consideration in the OPW and a response will issue to Wexford County Council as soon as possible.



## EU Funding

429. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when letters of offer for the funding programmes PEACE IV and INTERREG VA for 2014 to 2020 will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34912/16]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am pleased to advise the Deputy that agreement has now been reached between my officials and their Northern Ireland counterparts on the terms of Letters of Offer to programme beneficiaries for the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA programmes.

My objective has always been to Brexit-proof Letters of Offer to the greatest extent possible and to give programme beneficiaries assurance as to the legal and financial commitments they are entering into so they can plan for the future with confidence. I believe that we have achieved that, and that it will be possible to proceed with the full implementation of the programmes on a firmer basis than would otherwise have been the case.

The Special EU Programmes Body has begun the process of making Letters of Offer to programme beneficiaries, and I expect project announcements to commence shortly.

## Coastal Protection

430. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason for the decline in funding for the installation of rock armour at Maghery Strand in west Donegal; if his attention has been drawn to the increasing rates of coastal erosion and sand; if he will meet with representatives of the Maghery coastal erosion committee to discuss this further; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34964/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney):** The application received from Donegal County Council under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme for funding to undertake a project comprising coastal erosion defence repairs at Maghery Strand is not eligible for funding under the scheme as it did not meet the criteria of the scheme for a number of reasons which have been notified to the Council by the Office of Public Works. One important reason is that no economic consideration or justification of the proposed measures was presented in the application. It would be more appropriate that representatives of the Maghery coastal erosion committee meet with Donegal County Council to discuss the application.

## Urban Renewal Schemes

431. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the progress made to date on action 5.12; the details of the funding that has been made available as part of the town and village renewal initiative; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35111/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Action 5.12 of the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness contains a commitment that my Department and the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government will work together to provide funding for a range of demonstration projects across the country as part of the Town and Village Renewal Initiative. The objective of this action is



to support the revitalisation of towns and villages and increase their attractiveness and sustainability as places to live and work.

On 9 August 2016, I launched the Town and Village Renewal Scheme with an allocation of €10 million in funding for this year. A sum of €380,000 was made available to each of the 26 counties for 2016 under this initial phase of the scheme. Local Authorities, in conjunction with local communities and businesses, were invited to submit up to 8 proposals to my Department by the end of September for approval.

Following an assessment of the proposals received, on 4th November I announced the details of 172 towns and villages which will benefit from the funding available under this year's Town and Village Renewal Scheme for a range of demonstration projects. The full list of towns benefiting under the scheme is available on my Department's website at the following link:<http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/more-than-170-towns-and-villages-benefit-from-funding-under-e10m-town-and-village-renewal-scheme-minister-humphreys/>

I have secured increased funding of €12 million for an enhanced Town and Village Renewal scheme as part of Budget 2017. This represents a trebling of the original 2016 baseline allocation of €4 million. As part of an enhanced scheme in 2017, I intend to include a pilot initiative to encourage increased residential occupancy in town and village centres in line with commitment 5.12 in the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. My Department will work closely with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in finalising the details of this initiative.

### **Forestry Sector**

432. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 634 of 1 December 2015 and the reply to the question (details supplied), if she received the report; if so, when she will publish it; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34483/16]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Officials of my Department visited the site in question and met with relevant individuals late last year and subsequently reported on the matter. Targeted tree planning has been carried out at the site - originally a plantation which had become neglected over the past 25 years - as part of a ten year management plan for the woodland to encourage natural regeneration. The activities undertaken were carried out under license from the Forest Service and the works have been assessed and approved by my Department. The felling included a thinning out process to encourage continuous woodland cover and natural regeneration. Large numbers of invasive species such as Rhododendron, Sycamore and Laurel had become well established within the woodland. These species were rampant in the areas selected for thinning.

As part of the conditions agreed to secure the thinning license for the woods, the entity involved agreed to carry out the removal of all invasive species from the selected area. In addition, standing dead wood and veteran trees were selected for retention for conservation purposes.

From the selected thinning, some Oak were removed, as were all Sycamore, most Beech, some Ash, all Rhododendron and all Laurel, as well as Willow from dry areas only, with wet Willow being left in situ. Most Oak trees selected were between 60-80 years old, with the occasional older tree. Contrary to some reports, I am advised that there were no 400 year old Oak trees on the site.

Trees were removed to allow natural regeneration of the Oak woodland, to promote continuous woodland cover and to help in the conservation of this important site. The removal of the alien species and the thinning of the woodland assist in this management by allowing the light to reach the forest floor, encouraging the natural regrowth of the woodland. This had not happened over the last 25 years, so no natural regeneration had occurred.

Expert personnel from my Department have met the personnel involved to walk the site and assess the works carried out to date. My Department remains satisfied that the work was carried out in accordance to the conditions set out in the thinning/felling license. A further assessment was made recently to ensure that completion of the licensed works would be beneficial to the long-term recovery of the woodland.

### **Homeless Persons Supports**

433. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.15; the specific details of the improvements to be made to mental health and primary care for homeless persons as a result of increased funding of between €2 million and €6 million in budget 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35044/16]

434. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.16; the progress being made in identifying and meeting the rehabilitation needs of homeless persons with addiction issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35045/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 433 and 434 together.

Over €30m in HSE funding is used, on an annual basis, to provide targeted interventions aimed at improving health outcomes for homeless persons, who are more likely to experience health inequalities and difficulties in accessing services and present with multiple, complex health and support needs. Additional funding of €1.715m has been allocated from the €2m available to the HSE in 2016 to address mental health needs of homeless persons in the Dublin region. This funding is being used to provide care and case management to homeless persons in a number of supported accommodation settings in Dublin City Centre. In-reach GP, nursing and mental health nursing services provided to these settings have also been enhanced as a result of the additional funding.

I am committed to ensuring that improvements in mental health and primary care services for homeless persons achieved during 2016 are sustained over the course of the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. The priority for 2017 will be to ensure that the health-related needs associated with the provision of homeless accommodation and tenancies are addressed, with a view to ensuring that vulnerable homeless people have access to primary care and mental health services, where required. To this end, the HSE has been asked to provide the appropriate level of resources in the 2017 Service Plan to deliver on Action 1.15 of the Government's Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness.

As the Deputy will be aware, my Department is developing a new National Drugs Strategy which will cover the period from 2017 onwards. The rehabilitation needs of homeless people with addiction issues, many of whom have comorbid mental health problems, will be addressed through the development of the new National Drugs Strategy.

## **EU Directives**

435. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 455 of 25 October 2016, the status of his Department's examination into the fact that the Health Products Regulatory Authority, HPRA, has stated that it is currently unable to enforce the European medical devices directive (93/42/EEC) for the provision of custom made devices due to the fact there is no link between the EU legislation and Ireland's current dental legislation; if a decision has been made as to whether he will ensure that the new dental Bill will include the provisions necessary for the HPRA to enforce the European medical devices directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34417/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department, in conjunction with the Health Products Regulatory Authority, is currently examining the issues raised by the Deputy. No decision has been made on whether amending the Dental Act is the appropriate action.

## **Hospital Appointments Status**

436. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34418/16]

**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 scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

## **National Children's Hospital**

437. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide information in relation to the design and infrastructure for the new children's hospital and, in particular, whether it will provide for dedicated ward space and services for young persons with inflammatory bowel disease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34422/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The number of inpatient beds needed in the new children's hospital has been determined by detailed clinical activity analysis and health planning. Current clinical activity in the three Dublin children's hospitals, population growth, innovation and developments in treatments, waiting lists and unmet need have all been factored into the calculations for the inpatient bed numbers planned for the new children's hospital. All clinical specialties were considered in this health planning work.

With a very few exceptions, beds are not allocated or ring-fenced for particular conditions or services. The reason for this is to maximise the efficient use of beds depending on need. The number of children with inflammatory bowel disease requiring an inpatient bed at any one time is not constant and while one month a small number of beds might be required, in another

month a greater number of beds might be required.

In contrast to the current situation, in planning the new children's hospital, the Children's Hospital Group (CHG) has allocated beds to acute care, that is, beds for children admitted with an acute illness, the majority of whom are likely to require only a short in-patient stay. As a result of separating this cohort of children from those with chronic conditions who might require either planned or emergency admission, the CHG can allocate a group of beds for children with conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease which will be available to them when the bed is required but will be available to others also.

From an outpatient service viewpoint, the accommodation in which the gastroenterology outpatient department is situated includes clinical examination rooms, allocated rooms for the specialist nurses, rooms for the multi-disciplinary team, support rooms for children with gastrostomy feeding and rooms for outpatient investigations.

Within the theatre department, there are two endoscopy rooms which provide very significant extra capacity in terms of gastrointestinal endoscopy.

This allocation of resources has been developed with the GI team in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin.

### **HSE Properties**

438. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the reason St. Brendan's Community Care Unit Mortuary was closed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34429/16]

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

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

439. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); the reason this scheduled operation was cancelled suddenly; if he will ensure this operation is performed without any further delay to prevent further distress for the person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34430/16]

**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.

In relation to the specific case raised regarding scheduling of this procedure, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Hospice Services Provision**

440. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the factors that led to the need for an additional €1 million in funding for Wicklow Hospice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34431/16]

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

### **Public Health Policy**

441. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health in view of the fact that the national men's health policy expired in 2013, his plans on presenting a new policy and, if so, when; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34445/16]

442. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans to implement the Baker review; if so, when; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34446/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy) (Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 441 and 442 together.

Following publication of the Men's Health Policy (2008-2013), an independent report was commissioned by the HSE under Peter Baker to review the National Policy. Subsequent to this the HSE has developed and completed an Action Plan. The HSE has established a Group under the Health and Wellbeing Programme and is currently progressing its implementation.

### **Public Health Policy**

443. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans to update Healthy Ireland to take account of the Baker review recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34447/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy) (Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy):** Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025 was approved by Government in February 2013. It sets out a vision and four over-arching goals to improve the health and wellbeing for the entire population of Ireland over the coming generation. Implementation of the Framework over the period to 2025 will take account of emerging evidence, research, international best practice and national policy developments.

I am happy to update the Deputy on current implementation of Healthy Ireland. Key current priorities include:

#### **Implementation of the National Physical Activity Plan**

Get Ireland Active – the National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland which was developed in partnership with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and a range of key stakeholders including the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, was launched in January 2016.

Implementation during 2016 is concentrating on development of a communications campaign (led by the Department of Health) and supporting physical education in schools (Department of Education and Skills and PDST) amongst other initiatives.

#### **National Sexual Health Strategy 2015-2020**



The *National Sexual Health Strategy 2015-2020* was launched in October 2015. It takes a life course approach, acknowledging the importance of developing a healthy attitude to sexuality in young people and of building on that foundation for positive sexual health and wellbeing into adulthood and older age. The Strategy is being delivered in partnership between the Department of Health, the HSE and the Department of Education and Skills.

A Clinical Lead for Sexual Health Services has been appointed and a strategy implementation group has been established to deliver the actions and goals of the strategy. A 2017-2020 action plan is currently being developed.

#### Healthy Ireland Survey

The annual Healthy Ireland Survey was commissioned to enhance data collection and monitoring capacity to track progress in achieving targets to evaluate the success of Healthy Ireland. The first Healthy Ireland Survey Report was published in October 2015, with the report on the second wave published in October 2016. Survey results give an up-to-date picture of the health of the population.

Data collection for Wave 3 of the study is now underway.

#### Alignment of Education and Health Services

The Health and Wellbeing Programme and the Department of Education and Skills, in partnership with the HSE and PDST (Professional Development Service for Teachers), are working to strengthening collaboration, streamline and simplify current structures for the promotion of health and wellbeing in schools and to develop a more comprehensive service alignment to support the delivery of SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) and to extend the Health Promoting Schools initiative more widely in schools.

The Department of Education and Skills has announced the introduction of Wellbeing as a compulsory area of learning (encompassing the subjects SPHE, PE and CSPE) from September 2017 in the new Junior Cycle Framework. A particular focus for the Department of Health and the HSE is to ensure that the health service is fully supporting health and wellbeing in school settings around the country.

#### Healthy Workplaces Framework

My Department, with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, is leading a subgroup to develop a National Healthy Workplace Framework. This work primarily involves development of a framework to encourage and support the development of Health and Wellbeing programmes in all places of employment. The objective is to support employers to develop individual, practical plans identifying how they will protect and promote the physical, mental and social wellbeing of their employees, within the context of their own size, sector, location, number of employees, etc.

In addition, the workplace wellbeing element of the Health and Wellbeing (Calorie posting and workplace wellbeing) Bill which is in development will require all public sector workplaces to have and report on a healthy workplace policy.

#### ‘Warmth and Wellbeing’ Pilot Project

The Warmth and Wellbeing initiative is a new pilot scheme commencing in 2016, available in Dublin 12 and 24. It aims to establish if the provision of extensive energy efficiency upgrades to homes can have a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of the people living in the homes.



The Health and Wellbeing Programme is supporting this project which is being led by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and is a key action in the recently published Strategy to Combat Energy Poverty. The pilot will involve carrying out deep energy efficiency improvements to the homes of people with living with Asthma or COPD and who are in receipt of the fuel allowances and measuring the benefits to health and wellbeing.

#### Healthy Cities and Counties

Building on the work of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network, my Department and the National Healthy Cities and Counties Network of Ireland are working to develop a structure and provide supports to implement Healthy Ireland at local level. The Network aims to encourage best practice in promoting lifelong health, provide a forum through which local issues can influence national policy, and provide a voice for Ireland within the WHO Network of European Healthy Cities.

Work in 2016 focused on raising awareness and encouraging counties to join. The Network will be officially launched on 29 November 2016; five counties (Cork, Galway, Waterford, Mayo and South Dublin) will receive accreditation at the event and be named Healthy Counties.

#### Healthy Ireland Outcomes Framework

The development of the Healthy Ireland Outcomes Framework is nearing completion and a first version is due for publication in 2016. The Outcomes Framework will provide evidence to support an objective assessment of the impacts of Healthy Ireland and to help partners in wider government and society to prioritise their actions towards improving health and wellbeing.

### **Nursing Staff Recruitment**

444. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of new nursing staff recruited in each hospital (details supplied) this year to the end of October 2016, in tabular form; the number of nursing staff that left each hospital this year to the end of October 2016; the total number of nursing staff in each hospital in July 2016; and the net increase and decrease in nursing staff in each hospital this year to the end of October 2016 [34451/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

### **Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists**

445. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the numbers waiting for orthodontic treatment at the end of September 2016, based on local health office and area and indicating the numbers of those aged 16 years and under and those aged more than 16 years, in tabular form. [34453/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Health Services Provision**

446. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will cover the costs

of an MRI scan for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry who is unable to afford the private fee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34458/16]

**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 scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Medical Card Eligibility**

447. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the start date in 2017 that he plans for the provision of medical cards to all children in receipt of domiciliary care allowance; his views on the lack of clarity for parents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34460/16]

448. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health when he will publish the required legislation to provide medical cards to all children in receipt of domiciliary care allowance; if it will be introduced before the end of 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34462/16]

449. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide projected individual monthly costs for 2017 and allocated numbers of cards for the provision of medical cards to all children in receipt of the domiciliary care allowance used for the purposes of his Department's budgetary planning; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34464/16]

540. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health when his Department intends to meet its commitment to ensure that, in cases where domiciliary care allowance is being paid, children have the right to an automatic medical card; when this will happen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34802/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 447 to 449, inclusive, and 540 together.

I will be bringing a Memorandum to Government very shortly seeking permission for the preparation of the legislation to give effect to this measure. This new legislation will effectively mean that all children in respect of whom a DCA payment is made will automatically qualify for a medical card and, therefore, no longer be subject to the medical cards means test at any point in the future while in receipt of DCA. It is my objective to have this legislation prepared and brought before the Oireachtas as quickly as possible. In addition to the preparation of the legislation, I have asked the HSE, so that the proposal can be implemented in a smooth and efficient manner, to commence the process of planning for the requirements of the scheme and how the cards will issue.

It is estimated that approximately 9,000 children in respect of whom a DCA payment is currently being made are not in receipt of a medical card. The full year cost of providing these children, and the additional children expected to qualify for a DCA payment by end 2017, with a medical card is approximately €16m. The cost which will be incurred on a monthly basis

will ultimately depend on the number of children encompassed by the measure whose parents or guardians apply for a medical card, as well as the profile of service usage they incur. The 2017 Budget allocation for the measure is €10m and it is my intention that medical cards for these children will be provided as early as is possible, commensurate with the funding which has been allocated by the Oireachtas.

### **Primary Care Centres Provision**

450. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of a primary care centre for Finglas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34469/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Home Help Service Data**

451. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional home help hours additional to those provided in the previous month that have been provided on a county by county basis in each month since June 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34471/16]

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

### **Charitable and Voluntary Organisations**

452. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health when outstanding moneys will be paid to persons with contractual agreements to a charity (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34472/16]

**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.

### **Drug Treatment Programmes Availability**

453. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the facilities here that deliver rehabilitation to recovering addicts on prescriptive medicine who have schizophrenia or other mental health issues (details supplied). [34475/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As the specific issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to him.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

454. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be provided an appointment at Waterford Regional Hospital and if the matter will be expedited. [34477/16]

**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 scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Health Services Provision**

455. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if he will investigate the way a person (details supplied) was treated at Waterford Regional Hospital in June 2016; if the tests which were to be carried out will be arranged as the person was discharged before the tests were arranged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34478/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

456. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a new wheelchair will be provided for a person (details supplied); the reason for the delay in providing the wheelchair; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34479/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **General Practitioner Services Provision**

457. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health if he will support the west Clare community request that all the recently cut Shannondoc primary care medical services be restored to Kilrush, Ennistymon and Killaloe and that the 24-hour emergency department in Ennis General Hospital will be reopened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34481/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** General Practitioners contracted under the General Medical Services Scheme must make suitable arrangements to enable contact to be made with them, or a locum/deputy, for emergencies outside normal practice hours. While there is no obligation on GPs to participate in GP out-of-hours cooperatives as a means of meeting the contractual requirement, such services have been developed and expanded over time and are now an essential part of our primary care services helping to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, urgent care needs are met in the primary care setting. Where GPs decide not to become members of out-of-hours co-ops they must still discharge their contractual obligation

in terms of out-of-hours provision in accordance with their GP contract.

In the Mid West region, the out-of-hours arrangements for participating GPs are discharged through Shannondoc, a not-for-profit GP cooperative, which is funded by the HSE. Shannondoc has recently indicated that due to a difficulty in attracting GPs, and in particular locum cover, it is no longer able to maintain its existing service across all its centres.

Following discussions with Shannondoc, the HSE, in order to ensure the sustainability of the service, accepted a proposal from the cooperative to changes in the provision of the service. The most significant changes relate to parts of East and West Clare, essentially affecting Ennistymon, Kilrush, and Killaloe with minor changes in terms of operating hours in two locations in North Tipperary.

The recent changes to the Shannondoc out-of-hours services will be subject to a three-monthly review and their impact will be closely monitored and evaluated by the HSE.

In relation to the Deputy's query on the emergency department at Ennis General Hospital, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

458. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding a residential centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34485/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** As the Deputy's question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Cancer Services Provision**

459. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the action that can be taken to facilitate a person (details supplied); if the person can access the required services at another hospital in view of the existence of a hospital bug in Tallaght and the urgent need to access surgery at an early date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34486/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **General Practitioner Services Provision**

460. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a petition (details supplied); if he will maintain this vital service at its current level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34492/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** General Practitioners contracted under the General Medical Services Scheme must make suitable arrangements to enable contact to be made with them, or a locum/deputy, for emergencies outside normal practice hours. While there is no obligation on GPs to participate in GP out-of-hours cooperatives as a means of meeting the contractual requirement, such services have been developed and expanded over time

and are now an essential part of our primary care services helping to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, urgent care needs are met in the primary care setting. Where GPs decide not to become members of out-of-hours co-ops they must still discharge their contractual obligation in terms of out-of-hours provision in accordance with their GP contract.

In the Mid West region, the out-of-hours arrangements for participating GPs are discharged through Shannondoc, a not-for-profit GP cooperative, which is funded by the HSE. Shannondoc has recently indicated that due to a difficulty in attracting GPs, and in particular locum cover, it is no longer able to maintain its existing service across all its centres.

Following discussions with Shannondoc, the HSE, in order to ensure the sustainability of the service, accepted a proposal from the cooperative to changes in the provision of the service. The most significant changes relate to parts of East and West Clare, essentially affecting Ennistymon, Kilrush, and Killaloe with minor changes in terms of operating hours in two locations in North Tipperary,

The recent changes to the Shannondoc out-of-hours services will be subject to a three-monthly review and their impact will be closely monitored and evaluated by the HSE.

### **Health Services Provision**

461. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if attention has been drawn to the fact there is no chiropody or podiatry service in health centres in County Kildare despite the building of a primary care centre which is due to open early 2017; the action that will be taken to ensure public provision of these services in view of the fact that currently vouchers are provided towards the cost of private providers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34499/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

462. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34516/16]

**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 scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.



## **Disability Support Services Provision**

463. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE is currently assessing an application for a residential placement for a person (details supplied) in County Louth; the timeframe for the conclusion of this assessment process; and if a residential placement in an area (details supplied) would be appropriate for this person. [34518/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

## **Hospital Appointments Status**

464. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when persons (details supplied) can expect to receive an appointment for an EEG scan in Temple Street Children's Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34519/16]

**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 scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

## **National Treatment Purchase Fund Eligibility**

465. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the criteria in which certain persons (details supplied) awaiting cataract procedures with an ophthalmologist can avail of the National Treatment Purchase Fund at an earlier stage. [34527/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

## **Home Care Packages Provision**

466. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive hours for the home care package in view of the fact that it has been sanctioned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34529/16]

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

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

467. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive required medical items; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34530/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

468. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for HSE equipment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34531/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

469. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a transfer within Kerry Intervention and Disability Services, KIDS, in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34535/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Card Eligibility**

470. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider issuing medical cards to persons who have been diagnosed with cancer for the period they have cancer until they receive the all clear; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34539/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In accordance with the provisions of the Health Act 1970 (as amended), eligibility for a medical card is determined by the HSE. The Act obliges the HSE to assess whether a person is unable, without due hardship, to arrange general practitioner services for himself or herself and his or her family, having regard to his or her overall financial position and reasonable expenditure and every application must be assessed

on that basis. Under the legislation, having a particular illness, in itself, does not establish eligibility for a medical card and therefore, the medical conditions of applicants for this scheme are not monitored on that basis. Where the applicant's income is within the income guidelines, a medical card or GP visit card will be awarded.

Every effort is made by the HSE, within the framework of the legislation, to support applicants in applying for a medical card and, in particular, to take full account of the difficult circumstances in the case of applicants who may be in excess of the income guidelines.

In certain circumstances, the HSE may exercise discretion and grant a medical card, even though an applicant exceeds his or her income threshold, where he or she faces difficult financial circumstances, such as extra costs arising from an illness. Social and medical issues are considered when determining whether undue hardship exists for an individual accessing general practitioner or other medical services. The HSE affords applicants the opportunity to furnish supporting information and documentation to fully take account of all the relevant circumstances that may benefit them in the assessment, including medical evidence of cost and necessary expenses.

The HSE has a system in place for the provision of medical cards in response to an emergency situation for persons with a serious medical condition in need of urgent or on-going medical care that they cannot afford and persons in palliative care, who are terminally ill. With the exception of terminally ill patients, all medical cards, granted on an emergency basis, are issued on the basis that the patient is eligible for a medical card on the basis of means or undue hardship, and will follow up with a full application within a number of weeks of receiving the medical card eligibility. These cards are issued within 24 hours of receipt of the required patient details and a letter which confirms the medical condition from a doctor or consultant.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

471. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for inpatient and outpatient neurology appointments at each hospital across the seven hospital groups, in tabular form; if he will provide this information specifically regarding those waiting for three months, six months, nine months, 12 months or more than 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34540/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The NTPF publishes the updated public waiting list figures each month on its website ([www.NTPF.ie](http://www.NTPF.ie)) and the most recent figures as of 27th October were published on 4th November. The figures relating to Neurology inpatient and day case and outpatient waiting lists can be viewed in tabular form by the Deputy on this website. In the 2016 National Service Plan, the HSE has set out the following targets for inpatient day case and outpatient targets; 95% of patients should wait less than 15 months for an inpatient or day case procedure and 85% of patients should wait less than 52 weeks for their first appointment.

There are currently 271 patients waiting for an inpatient or day case neurology appointment across all of the Hospital Groups. 72% of these patients have been waiting less than 6 months and 84% are waiting less than 15 months for their inpatient or day case appointment.

A total of 16,470 people waiting for an outpatient neurology appointment. 78% of these people are waiting less than 12 months for their appointment.

At my request, in August, the HSE developed an Action Plan to reduce, by year end, the number of patients currently waiting 18 months or more for an inpatient/daycase procedure.

The action plan also involves putting in place systematic process improvements in respect of waiting list management, which will be supported and monitored by SDU performance improvement 'Leads' in each Hospital Group.

In addition to this Budget 2017 provides for the treatment of our longest-waiting patients. €20m is being allocated to the NTPF, rising to €55m in 2018. Planning of this initiative is at an advanced stage by the NTPF, my Department and the HSE.

### **Hospital Staff Data**

472. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of neurologists employed at each hospital across the seven hospital groups, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34541/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

### **Primary Care Centres**

473. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 405 of 25 October 2016, the discussions that are taking place to extend antenatal services to the new primary care centre in Balbriggan; the persons or bodies the discussions are with; the services that are being considered to be extended; the additional staffing requirements that would be required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34544/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Consultant Recruitment**

474. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of the recruitment of a second permanent consultant neurologist for the north west region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34545/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

### **Medicinal Products Prices**

475. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if he has met with representatives of the medical nutrition industry to secure a cost saving framework for medical nutrition products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34546/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicinal products under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. Accordingly, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

I have not held any formal meetings with representatives of the medical nutrition industry.

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

476. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the steps taken to ensure HSE draft guidelines for clinical nutritional products, as proposed by the primary care reimbursement service, do not negatively impact the availability of product or patient services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34547/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicinal products under the community drug schemes in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

477. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment at University Hospital Kerry for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34549/16]

**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 scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Hospital Appointments Administration**

478. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address an issue (details supplied) regarding the MRI scanner in University Hospital Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34552/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Blood Donations**

479. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health when he plans to defer the lifetime MSM blood donation ban to the one year deferral period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34553/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In June of this year, I accepted a recommendation from the Irish Blood Transfusion Service that (a) the lifetime deferral policy for men

who have sex with men (MSM) from donating blood should be reduced to a period of one year following their last sexual encounter with a man and (b) all donors who have had a sexually transmitted infection (STI) should be deferred from donating blood for a period of at least five years from that infection (current deferral periods vary depending on the STI concerned).

The IBTS advise that these changes will be implemented by the end of January 2017.

### **Health Services Provision**

480. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the serious issues facing a health centre (details supplied) due to understaffing; his plans to deal with the chronic understaffing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34568/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme Eligibility**

481. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider changing the financial assessment method for the nursing home support scheme in relation to the assessment of family farms as assets; if he will extend the existing three year cap to include family farms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34578/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee):** The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS) is a system of financial support for those in need of long-term nursing home care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their income and assets while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings. A financial assessment is carried out by the HSE to determine how much a participant in the Scheme will contribute to the cost of their care.

A person's Principal Private Residence (PPR) is only included in the financial assessment for the first three years of the NHSS participants' time in care. A farm or relevant business can also qualify for the three year cap where unexpected health events prevent early succession arrangements. This applies where:

- a) The applicant has suffered a sudden illness or disability which caused them to require care services and
- b) A substantial part of the working day of the applicant or their partner was regularly and consistently applied to the farming of the farm or carrying on of the relevant business until the onset of the sudden illness or disability, and
- c) A family successor certifies in writing that he or she will on a consistent and regular basis apply a substantial part of his or her working day to the farming of the farm or the carrying on of the relevant business.

The Programme for a Partnership Government has committed to reviewing the NHSS to remove any discrimination against small business and family farms.

Furthermore, when the NHSS 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. Arising out of the Review, a number of key issues have been identified for more detailed consideration across Departments and Agencies, including the treatment of business and farm assets for the purposes of the financial assessment element of the Scheme. This work is currently underway and the IFA has made a submission in this context to the Interdepartmental Group which is overseeing the Review. Changes arising from this Review may require legislative implementation.

### **Drug and Alcohol Task Forces**

482. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide new additional funding to drugs and alcohol task forces to allow these groups to deal with alcohol within their remit; his views on the importance of this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34580/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** In line with the National Drugs Strategy, the Government is committed to continuing support for initiatives to tackle the drug problem. Drug and Alcohol Task Forces play a key role in assessing the extent and nature of the drug problem in their areas and in coordinating action at local level, so that there is a targeted response to the problem of substance misuse in local communities.

Following the 2011/12 Review of Drug Task Forces, increased responsibilities were given to Task Forces in relation to addressing the alcohol problem. In light of this expanded role, over €900,000 in additional funding has been made available to Drug and Alcohol Task Forces from the Dormant Accounts Fund for substance misuse initiatives. This initiative aims to promote healthier lifestyle choices throughout society in relation to alcohol, by influencing and raising awareness of alcohol harm among the general population and specific risk groups. In addition, through the Alcohol Forum, training has been provided to a number of Task Forces in developing local alcohol action plans.

Every effort has been made to protect the budgets of Drug and Alcohol Task Forces in recent years. The overall allocation to Drug and Alcohol Task Forces for community-based drugs initiatives this year is in excess of €27.6 million, the same amount provided in 2014 and 2015. The Department of Health will shortly be writing to Task Forces to invite them to submit their recommendations for funding of drugs initiatives in 2017. It is a matter for Task Forces to ensure that their budget is effectively deployed to address current priorities and locally identified needs.

### **Hospital Services**

483. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding University Hospital Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34585/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Hospital Services**

484. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Ques-

tion No. 433 of 18 October 2016, the number of persons that are accessing services (details supplied) at Our Lady's Hospital, Cashel, County Tipperary [34589/16]

485. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 433 of 18 October 2016, the number of staff in the administrative services and catering services of Our Lady's Hospital, Cashel, County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34590/16]

486. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the role HIQA has in determining the suitability of using Our Lady's Hospital, Cashel, County Tipperary as a step-down bed facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34591/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 484 to 486, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### **Vaccination Programme**

487. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider that parents and guardians should be given the option of providing consent for each HPV vaccination and not as it is at present, that is, consenting for at the start of the series of jabs; if he will consider providing the parents the right to give consent individually for the two vaccinations; and his views on the fact that this would allow the parents to monitor the health of their daughters after each vaccination. [34594/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Vaccination Programme**

488. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if there is a possibility of aluminium in Gardasil forms of HPV vaccines crossing the blood brain barrier; if he will publish any data held by his Department on this subject; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34595/16]

489. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if there is a possibility of potential synergistic toxicity of aluminium in HPV vaccines. [34596/16]

490. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if pandemrix was at one time considered as safe as the HPV vaccines and that the benefits outweighed the risks; and if there is a possibility that the many autoimmune reactions being experienced by HPV vaccinated girls are following a similar pattern of neurological disturbances. [34597/16]

491. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the data that the manufacturer submitted to the EMA which indicated that those pre-exposed to vaccine relevant HPV may experience a 44.6% increased risk of pre-cancerous lesions after vaccination with Gardasil; and the steps in place to monitor cervical cancer rates in the HPV vaccinated population. [34598/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 488 to 491, inclusive, together.

The immunisation programme in Ireland is based on the advice of the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC). NIAC is a committee of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland comprising of experts in a number of specialties including infectious diseases, paediatrics and public health. The committee's recommendations are informed by public health advice and international best practice.

Each year in Ireland around 300 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine protects against two high risk types of HPV (16 & 18) that cause 73% of all cervical cancers. Vaccinated women and girls will still be at risk from other high risk types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer and will therefore need to continue to have regular cervical smear tests. NIAC recommended that the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine be given to all girls aged 12-13 in 2009 and in September 2010 the HPV vaccination programme was introduced for all girls in first year of second level schools.

By January 2016, over 200 million doses of Gardasil had been distributed worldwide. In Ireland over 580,000 doses of Gardasil have been administered and over 220,000 girls have been fully vaccinated against HPV since it was introduced in 2010.

Aluminium has been used in vaccines for many decades to improve the body's response to vaccination. It is a component of Gardasil and several other vaccines. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine safety (an expert clinical and scientific advisory body) has concluded that there is no evidence of a health risk from aluminium-containing vaccines.

The safety of the aluminium adjuvant used in Gardasil has been established in clinical studies and the level of aluminium present is tightly controlled as part of the quality control testing of the vaccine. Gardasil which contains amorphous aluminium hydroxyphosphate sulphate adjuvant was tested in nonclinical safety assessment studies where daily monitoring for physical signs did not reveal any notable effects on any physiological function. In addition, the safety of Gardasil was tested in human clinical studies and no signs of concern were identified. Apart from the expected immune response and local injection site reactions, there was no evidence of systemic effects (such as effects on CNS, respiratory, cardiovascular, and renal systems) caused by HPV L1 VLP vaccines such as Gardasil from study data and there is no data to suggest that Gardasil crosses the blood brain barrier. The pharmacological evaluation of Gardasil focused on the evaluation of primary pharmacodynamics (i.e. immunogenicity) as the vaccine did not show any effects apart from the expected immune response.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) is a decentralised agency of the European Union responsible for the scientific evaluation, supervision and safety monitoring of medicines developed by pharmaceutical companies for use in the EU. It would not be appropriate to comment on data submitted by manufacturers of a medicinal product to the EMA as part of their market authorisation processes or monitoring of its safety following authorisation for use.

No medicine, including vaccines, is entirely without risk, there is therefore on-going pharmacovigilance and monitoring of medicinal products once they are authorised for use. The safety profile of Gardasil has been continuously monitored since it was first authorised both nationally and at EU level. In Ireland, the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) is the statutory regulatory authority for medicines in Ireland.

As part of its monitoring of the safety of medicines, the HPRA operates an adverse reaction reporting system, where healthcare professionals and patients are encouraged to report adverse reactions they consider may be associated with their treatment, through the range of options in place for reporting. All reports of suspected adverse reactions submitted to the HPRA are reviewed and followed up as necessary to ensure all relevant information is available, prior to

onward reporting to relevant stakeholders, including the EMA. At EU level, regulators continuously monitor this cumulative reporting experience as part of the ongoing assessment of the safety of HPV vaccines. In addition, pharmaceutical companies are obliged, as a condition of the authorisation to market a medicine, to submit reports of adverse reactions received directly, to the HPRA. In accordance with its reporting obligations, the HPRA provides anonymised details of reports received to the EMA, the WHO and to the relevant pharmaceutical companies. The fact that a suspected adverse reaction has been reported does not necessarily mean that the medicine has caused the observed effect, which may have also been caused by the condition being treated, a new condition the patient developed, or by another medicine that the patient is taking. Further data are usually needed to complete the picture.

I am aware of claims of an association between HPV vaccination and a number of conditions experienced by a group of young women. It appears that some girls first suffered symptoms around the time they received the HPV vaccine, and understandably some parents have connected the vaccine to their daughter's condition. It is important to reassure people that anyone who is suffering ill health is eligible to seek medical attention, and to access appropriate health and social care services, irrespective of the cause of their symptoms. The individual nature of the needs of some children may require access to specialist services. The HSE are currently working to put in place a clinical care pathway appropriate to the medical needs of this group.

I encourage the parents of all eligible girls to ensure that their daughters receive this important cancer preventing vaccine.

### **Home Help Service Provision**

492. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide home help hours for a person (details supplied) in order for the person to be able to remain at home; if he will take into consideration that this is a high dependency case in view of the medical circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34599/16]

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

### **Medical Card Applications**

493. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34609/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

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

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

494. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a procedure in the South Infirmity Victoria University Hospital, County Cork in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34610/16]

**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.

### Hospital Services

495. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Health if his Department has fully assessed the safety implications of the south east region, University Hospital Waterford (UHW) and adjacent hospitals having full reliance on a single cardiac catheterisation laboratory which is located in UHW in the provision of life critical procedures in that geographic area; his views on whether the lack of a second laboratory in the region further adds to the already extensive waiting lists which in turn puts additional pressure on the singular laboratory; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34614/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Minister will be aware that, following an independent clinical review, it has been determined that a second cardiac cath lab at University Hospital Waterford (UHW) is not justified. My Department has examined the review in detail and advises that Dr. Herity's analysis and his recommendations are very soundly based and provide a robust evidence base for future decisions regarding invasive cardiology services in the South East. Implementation of Dr. Herity's report will, I believe, strengthen the provision of safe and sustainable services for patients in the South East.

In relation to current waiting lists for cath lab services, the position is that Dr. Herity recommends investing in UHW to address waiting times and to provide improved access for patients. The additional resources necessary to implement this recommendation, to increase the number of weekly sessions currently provided, will be reflected in the HSE National Service Plan 2017.

Dr. Herity also recommends that some services be provided elsewhere. I have asked my Department to address the implications of this recommendation by undertaking a national review of all primary PCI services with the aim to ensure that as many patients as possible have access on a 24/7 basis to safe and sustainable emergency interventions following a heart attack. I expect the review to be completed by the end of July 2017.

### Hospital Appointments Status



496. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34615/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

497. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34617/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

498. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied). [34618/16]

**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.

### **Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists**

499. **Deputy Michael D'Arcy** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether it is acceptable that there is a 53-month waiting list for orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; the actions he will take to improve the waiting time for the person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34619/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

500. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34620/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

501. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34621/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

502. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34622/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

503. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34623/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

504. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34624/16]

**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.

### Medicinal Products Supply

505. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health when the last contact between the HSE corporate pharmaceutical unit and a company (details supplied) took place; if he has read a report from the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group, which conducted a very thorough assessment of the cost effectiveness of a drug, taking into consideration likely savings from reduced primary, secondary and tertiary care expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34625/16]

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

### Medical Card Administration

506. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health when he expects to receive the final report from the clinical advisory group on medical cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34626/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Clinical Advisory Group was established by the Director General of the HSE in January 2015 to provide clinical oversight and guidance to the operation of a more compassionate and trusted medical card system.

As the report is being prepared for the HSE, it is a matter for the HSE as to when it will be completed and submitted to me.

## Neuro-Rehabilitation Policy

507. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the expected date for the publication of the implementation plan for the neuro-rehabilitation strategy which was published in 2011; the level of investment that will be made available in 2017 to begin to develop neuro-rehabilitation services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34627/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Programme for Partnership Government places a particular focus on a number of key programmes and strategies, including publishing a plan for advancing Neuro-rehabilitation services in the community. Currently a National Steering Group, chaired by the Health Service Executive (HSE) Head of Disability Reform, is considering feedback on a draft implementation framework which was circulated for consultation to wider stakeholder interest groups. The revised framework will guide and oversee the reconfiguration and development of Neuro-rehabilitation structures and services at national and local level from a non-acute perspective. Given the lead role of the HSE in this process, I have arranged for the Deputy's question to be referred to the HSE for a direct reply to the Deputy.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

508. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting to be seen by a genetic counsellor in the department of clinical genetics, Crumlin, and the National Centre for Medical Genetics, Temple Street; the current waiting time for a routine appointment to be seen in these genetics clinics, both for a counsellor and consultant; and the steps the HSE is taking to address the numbers waiting for genetics clinics. [34635/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

509. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34649/16]

**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.

### **Suicide Prevention**

510. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the counties which have local implementation structures in place across the country further to the plans outlined in Connecting for Life; the counties that have produced local suicide prevention action plans; when the remaining local plans will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34650/16]

**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.

### **Hospitals Data**

511. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons accessing key primary care services at Our Lady's Hospital, Cashel, County Tipperary, specifically in a number of disciplines (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34651/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospitals Data**

512. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons accessing the primary care community mental health nursing services at Our Lady's Hospital, Cashel, County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34652/16]

**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.

### **Hospitals Data**

513. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons accessing services (details supplied) at Our Lady's Hospital, Cashel, County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34653/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Administration**

514. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a procedure for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34663/16]

**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 scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Primary Care Centres Provision**

515. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 383 of 11 October 2016, if the detail of a location (details supplied) will be forwarded to the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34676/16]

516. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 383 of 11 October 2016, if the detail of a location (details supplied) will be forwarded to the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34678/16]

517. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 383 of 11 October 2016, if the detail of a location (details supplied) will be forwarded to the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34680/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 515 to 517, inclusive, together.

The HSE has responsibility for the provision, maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities. I am advised that my officials have contacted you directly on this issue and have provided you with contact details for the appropriate Directorate in the HSE.

### **Hospital Staff**

518. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if consideration will be given to the transfer of a person (details supplied) from the ambulance services to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, as per a previous appointment which has since been retracted. [34690/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

519. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for an assessment from Cork University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34694/16]

**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 scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

520. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34699/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

521. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34700/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

522. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34701/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

523. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34703/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

524. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34705/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

525. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34706/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

526. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34707/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

527. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34709/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

528. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34711/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

529. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34712/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

530. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34713/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

531. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34715/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

532. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34753/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

533. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34754/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

534. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34755/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Ser-



vice 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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

535. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34756/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

536. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34757/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

537. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation in respect of a person (details supplied). [34758/16]

**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.

### **Home Care Packages Provision**

538. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Health if he will restore a home care package for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34759/16]

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

### **Vaccination Programme**

539. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the status of the significant issues and subsequent delays in providing the BCG vaccine; when the last round of the BCG vaccinations were given to children; his plans to have the vaccine remain as part of the childhood immunisation programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34801/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** There is currently a worldwide shortage of BCG vaccine. In 2015 the United Nations Children's Funds (UNICEF) estimated a worldwide shortage of 65 million doses of BCG. The vaccine has not been available in Ireland since the end of April 2015. The manufacturer has had difficulties in the production of the BCG vaccine. The manufacturer has informed the HSE there will be no supply of BCG until 2017. Consequently, BCG vaccination clinics in HSE Clinics and Maternity hospitals have been postponed until new stock arrives.

There is only one licensed supplier of BCG vaccine to Ireland and to other countries within the EU. Since this problem became apparent, the HSE National Immunisation Office has been in regular contact with the manufacturer of BCG vaccine to ascertain when the vaccine might be available. The HSE has also asked the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), which licenses and regulates all human medicines in Ireland, to source an alternate supplier of the BCG vaccine. Efforts have been made to find a company who can provide the vaccine for use in Ireland which satisfies all the HPRA requirements on safety and efficacy. To date no suitable alternative BCG product has been found. Therefore the HSE has been unable to procure the BCG vaccine from any other source and still awaits the product from the HPRA licensed supplier of the vaccine.

The supplier has indicated that supplies of the vaccine are not expected to be delivered into Ireland until early 2017. When there is confirmation of the date of new supply a decision will be made, guided by the recommendations of the National Immunisation Advisory Committee, on who should be prioritised to receive the vaccine.

*Question No. 540 answered with Question No. 447.*

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

541. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health if he will increase funding to an organisation (details supplied) in order to allow it to continue to provide services for persons with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34806/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Autism Support Services**

542. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the actions undertaken by his Department after a recent meeting with Laois Offaly Families for Autism, LOFFA, in order to address current issues with services for children with autism spectrum disorder in counties Laois and Offaly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34808/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Minister Flanagan and I met with Jude O'Neill, Head of Social Care from CHO area 8 as well as LOFFA representatives on the 27 October 2016. Jude committed to meeting with LOFFA representatives at the earliest opportunity to discuss in detail the concerns raised. The meeting is scheduled to take place on 16 November 2016 in Tullamore.

Following the meeting, it is intended to put in place an action plan that will resolve all outstanding issues.

## Accident and Emergency Services Provision

543. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health if his Department has conducted an impact assessment of the decision to remove accident and emergency provision in Nenagh hospital; if his Department plans to review this decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34809/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** There are no plans to reopen the Emergency Department (ED) at Nenagh Hospital.

The Smaller Hospitals Framework, published in 2013, defines the role of Ireland's smaller hospitals. It outlines the need for smaller hospitals and larger hospitals to work together within hospital groups; the reorganisation of hospitals into more efficient and accountable hospital groups will ensure that all hospitals play a vital role in service delivery. The Deputy can be assured that I am strongly committed to developing the role of smaller hospitals so that they play a key role in the provision of services to local communities.

Nenagh Hospital is a constituent hospital in the University of Limerick Hospitals Group. In that context, the Nenagh Local Injury Unit provides care to patients with minor injuries and plays a significant role to divert patients from the ED in University Hospital Limerick (UHL). The Deputy will be aware that a new larger ED is under development at UHL. I can confirm that increased funding will be available to the UL Hospitals Group in 2017 to facilitate the opening of this new ED. The detail of the additional funding will be set out in the National Service Plan 2017 which will be finalised shortly.

## Health Services Staff Data

544. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the spend on agency staff at Nenagh hospital over each of the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34810/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

## Psychological Assessments Waiting Times

545. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the current waiting lists for assessments and appointments with child psychologists in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34811/16]

**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.

## Psychological Assessments Waiting Times

546. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the number of children that are currently waiting an appointment with a child psychologist in counties Tipperary, Laois and Offaly respectively; the number of these that have been waiting more than six months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34812/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

547. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the current waiting times across all departments in Nenagh hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34813/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Speech and Language Therapy Provision**

548. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the number of children that are currently waiting more than six months for speech and language therapy in counties Laois, Offaly and Tipperary respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34814/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Mental Health Services Provision**

549. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to current plans to construct a facility in the Tullamore area that will be used to treat persons with forensic mental health needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34819/16]

**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.

### **Mental Health Services Provision**

550. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with forensic mental health needs currently being treated in community health care facilities across the state; the counties in which the facilities are situated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34820/16]

**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.

### **Mental Health Services Provision**

551. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health if there are any specific requirements in terms of staffing or security measures required for a health care facility to be approved as suitable for the treatment of those with forensic mental health needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34821/16]

**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.

### **Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists**

552. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the general waiting list for orthodontic diagnostics at Merlin Park, University Hospital Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34899/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists**

553. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the general waiting list for orthodontic diagnostics at University Hospital Galway due to the lack of a suitable dental X-ray machine in the radiography department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34900/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Home Help Service Data**

554. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons receiving home help hours in each community healthcare organisation, CHO; the number on waiting lists in each CHO for home help hours as of October 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34904/16]

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

### **Primary Care Centres Provision**

555. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the process for suitable sites for a primary care centre or other health facility to be submitted to the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34905/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **General Practitioner Services Provision**

556. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when an additional general practitioner will be appointed to the areas of Cloughjordan and Borrisokane following retirement of a previous general practitioner. [34907/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service issue, it has been referred



to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

557. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of needs assessments by assessment of needs officers, AONs, in areas (details supplied) in Dublin; the reason for the delay in provision of these assessment of needs officers, the number of AONs currently in place; the number that will be in place by the end of 2016; when the backlog of applicants will be cleared; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34916/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the HSE. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Accommodation Provision**

558. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the bed capacity review; when this will conclude; the terms of reference for the review; the definition of a bed in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34928/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to the undertaking of a national hospital bed capacity review “to establish the number, type and location of beds required into the future recognising the need for a range of beds including critical care, palliative and day case bed stock”. This is an important piece of work which will enable the determination of future capacity requirements across the system and provide a basis for planning our health service into the future.

In order to be as effective as possible, I am anxious that this review will take a broad approach to capacity across our health service. In this regard, preliminary work is underway in my Department to determine the parameters and terms of reference for the review. I hope that this initial work will be completed shortly and that the review will be advanced sufficiently to enable it to contribute to the review of the Capital Plan 2016 - 2021 next year.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

559. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the areas the additional €31 million he announced in summer 2016 will be allocated to; if this allocation is being made; if it is a once-off increase in funding or if it will form part of an increase in the annual spend; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34933/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will

empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

Of the additional €31m secured earlier this year, €28m is helping address existing financial pressures arising from on-going service improvement, including the costs incurred from compliance with national residential standards, services provided to meet the changing needs of people with disabilities and the provision of emergency residential places. The remaining €3m has been allocated to new initiatives, including the provision of additional services to meet the needs of school leavers with disabilities and emergency residential placements arising in 2016.

Budget 2017 includes an increased allocation to the Disability Services Programme to address a number of key priorities in the Programme for Partnership Government. The additional funding of €31m secured in 2016 has been incorporated into the base allocation for disability services in 2017, which will rise to over €1.654bn, an increase of €92 million on the Budget 2016 allocation.

The quantum of service to be provided will be outlined in the Health Service Executive's National Service Plan for 2017, which is currently being prepared by the Executive. Pending agreement of the National Service Plan, I am not in a position to comment on the specific allocation.

As this is a matter in the first instance for the HSE, I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Provision**

560. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will make additional resources available to St. Christopher's services, County Longford to ensure that they can reverse a decision of a number of years ago to reduce respite services from seven nights a week to five (details supplied). [34934/16]

561. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the level of funding that is made payable to St. Christopher's services, County Longford to take account of the carry over deficit they have and the recent improvements they have made to comply with HIQA inspections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34935/16]

562. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether it is fair and equitable that section 38 organisations and the HSE are in a position to pay staff increments, while smaller services such as St. Christopher's in Longford are not in view of the stringent financial position they are in (details supplied); his plans to address this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34936/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 560 to 562, inclusive, together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the

quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Ambulance Service Data**

563. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the volume of calls received by the ambulance service in respect of each division (details supplied) in County Donegal for each month in 2016 to date, in tabular form; the origin of calls made, that is the operational area from which calls were received, and the respective station from which an ambulance was subsequently dispatched in response in each case; if calls were classified as being emergency or non-emergency or intermediate cases in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34942/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Ambulance Service Staff**

564. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff employed as ambulance crew by the ambulance service by county, in tabular form; the rate of turnover of personnel across the service, and on a county basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34943/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Ambulance Service**

565. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of instances whereby intermediate care vehicles have been dispatched in response to emergency calls received by the ambulance service in County Donegal in 2016 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34944/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Mental Health Services**

566. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will provide details of the HSE procurement process that was undertaken prior to selecting and employing the review team that carried out the recent review of the Roscommon mental health services in view of the issues highlighted in the south of the country regarding a case (details supplied) and the HSE non-adherence to its own procurement policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34945/16]

567. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will provide details of the selection process that was used and who was involved in the

selection and employment of the review team who undertook the review of Roscommon mental health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34946/16]

568. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will explain the reason there has been a deviation from the terms of reference in relation to the length of time it has taken to complete the review of Roscommon mental health services; the cost of the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34947/16]

569. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health the additional costs that were incurred as a result of the extended period of time allowed for the review of the Roscommon mental health services (details supplied); if these costs will be taken from the budget for existing services; the legal costs and expenses outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34948/16]

570. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health when the report of the review on Roscommon mental health services will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34949/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 566 to 570, inclusive, together.

As this is a service issue these questions have been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

### **Mental Health Commission**

571. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will clarify the review that is being undertaken to deal with matters (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34950/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee):** The Mental Health Commission is charged with inspecting every approved mental health centre at least once a year and producing a report on this inspection. The Commission has now published its report on the Midlands Regional Hospital in Portlaoise. It found that this hospital was non-compliant in terms of Individual Care Plans and the administration of medicines.

To deal with these issues, the hospital has convened a multi-disciplinary working group to develop a new Individual Care Plan template and appointed a pharmacist to oversee the administration of medicines.

The report also found that there were issues in relation to the admission of children and the use of seclusion in the hospital.

The hospital has taken the following corrective actions:

- A Policy on the Use of Seclusion has been updated to include provision for the frequency of training and identifies appropriately qualified persons to deliver that training.
- There will be a daily review of seclusion orders by second Consultant Psychiatrist.
- Seclusion training will be provided for all staff.
- All children will be admitted to a single room with 1:1 nursing care.

Having ensured that any immediate safety concerns have been addressed the HSE is now working at all levels within the Mental Health Division on a programme of work to ensure that

the services offered in Portlaoise are not only safe, but of the highest possible quality. There is daily and weekly monitoring of this work at regional and national levels respectively. I am satisfied that the hospital concerned is making progress in relation to the issues raised in the reports.

The Department will, however, continue to closely monitor the issues raised in the Mental Health Commission report, in conjunction with the HSE, to ensure that the necessary corrective actions have been taken.

### **Disability Services Provision**

572. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health the number of full-time adult residential care places that were provided in County Wexford in each of the years from 2008 to date in 2016. [34952/16]

573. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health the number of service users that are currently on the waiting list to access full-time adult residential care places in County Wexford. [34953/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 572 and 573 together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Provision**

574. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health the number of the five respite beds provided by a company (details supplied) that are currently occupied on a semi-permanent to permanent basis by service users waiting for full-time adult residential care places. [34954/16]

575. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied that the HSE in County Wexford is utilising respite accommodation for adults to cater for adults who require full-time residential care places; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34955/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 574 and 575 together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be

referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Ambulance Service Accommodation**

576. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the costs incurred obtaining planning permission for the ambulance station in Edenderry. [34968/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Mental Health Services Provision**

577. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the construction of a crisis house for the mental health service at Clonmel, County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34970/16]

**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.

### **Disability Services Provision**

578. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if a commitment by the HSE to relax and repeal a previously enforced time rule restricting the period of leave from the home for parents and guardians of children with complex needs receiving in-home nursing care in County Donegal to 30 minutes in duration has been executed and communicated to stakeholders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34971/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Palliative Care for Children**

579. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if all nursing staff recruited as part of the most recent recruitment campaign to appoint personnel to provide in-home palliative care to children with complex needs in County Donegal, and that are currently on temporary contracts of employment, shall have their contracts automatically renewed prior to expiration or shall be offered a permanent position; the measures which will be put in place to ensure that service users do not experience any service disruption due to such contractual issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34972/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Home Care Packages Funding**



580. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health if he will award funding for a home care package for a person (details supplied) to allow them to return home. [34974/16]

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

### Hospital Waiting Lists

581. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34978/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

582. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34985/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

583. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34986/16]

**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.

### **Nursing Staff Provision**

584. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding permanent nursing positions within the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34987/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

585. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34988/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

586. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34989/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

587. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34990/16]

**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.

### Medicinal Products Reimbursement

588. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health his plans to remove a tablet (details supplied), which is prescribed for macular degeneration of the eyes, from the hardship scheme. [34991/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicinal products under the community drug schemes in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

## Medicinal Products Availability

589. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health his plans to remove any item now accessible under the hardship scheme from the hardship scheme. [34992/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration and operation of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

## Hospital Waiting Lists

590. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34993/16]

**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.

## Hospital Waiting Lists

591. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34994/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

592. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34995/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

593. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34996/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

594. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34997/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

595. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35002/16]

**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.

### **Hospital Equipment**

596. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the reason despite the two new reconstructions at a total cost of €10.15 million and €12.6 million on Our Lady's Hospital, Cashel, County Tipperary, medical and surgical equipment has been removed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35006/16]

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

### **Hospital Facilities**

597. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if Our Lady's Hospital, Cashel, County Tipperary has any designated space for worship or spiritual care since the removal of the oratory that was previously in place at the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35007/16]



**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** There is an Oratory/reflection room/quiet room in Our Lady's Hospital Cashel. It is located near the lift and adjacent to the old front door and has been there for many years.

### **Cancer Screening Programmes**

598. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the details of the programme for BreastCheck at Sligo University Hospital in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35008/16]

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

### **Medicinal Products Availability**

599. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the arrangements he has made to enable compassionate access to cannabis based medicines for a person (details supplied) and other persons with medical conditions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35010/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I am aware that many patients believe that cannabis should be a treatment option for their medical condition. However, with the exception of Sativex, cannabis-based preparations are not currently authorised as medicines in Ireland. Cannabis has not gone through the normal regulatory procedures for medicines which are designed to protect patients and ensure treatments are supported by good evidence of their safety and efficacy.

I am however committed to urgently reviewing policy on medicinal cannabis. I have requested the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) to provide me with expert advice on the matter. The HPRA's statutory role is to protect and enhance human health by regulating medicines and other health products and it has the necessary clinical and scientific expertise to provide advice on this issue. I have asked the HPRA to report on recent developments in the use of medicinal cannabis in other countries including an overview of emerging research. This report may also propose changes to Irish legislation in relation to the use of medicinal cannabis.

Separately the Oireachtas Health Committee will also start to examine the issue of medicinal cannabis later this month. I hope to receive the report from the HPRA and the output from the Oireachtas Health Committee early in the new year and I will then be in a position to consider future policy and progress any legislative changes that may be recommended.

In the meantime, it must be emphasised that treatment options for a particular condition are a matter to be discussed between a patient, their carer and their doctor in the first instance. There are, for example, cannabis-based preparations intended for the treatment of certain types of epilepsy which are currently undergoing clinical trials. It may be possible for patients to access these products on an individual basis, but this is something for discussion with the treating doctor.

Cannabis-based preparations are strictly controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Acts. It is open for an Irish registered doctor to apply for a licence for such preparations for an individual, named-patient. Such applications will be considered on a case by case basis. The appropriateness of any particular treatment is a matter between the patient and their doctor. It would be entirely inappropriate for me, as Minister for Health, to involve myself in this process. My

understanding is that many doctors would be quite cautious about recommending a cannabis-based treatment for a patient, in the absence of the robust clinical evidence which underpins authorised medicines.

### **Hospital Staff Recruitment**

600. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the detail of the targeting methods being utilised and the timeframe envisaged in order to meet the required staffing levels to ensure the new emergency department in University Hospital Limerick, Dooradoyle, is open by or prior to May 2017. [35012/16]

601. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the timeline of hiring the additional staff needed for the new emergency department at the University Hospital Limerick, Dooradoyle. [35013/16]

602. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of successful posts that have been awarded, and that are yet to be filled, and if the recruitment process is on track for completion in order that the new emergency department in University Hospital Limerick, Dooradoyle, can open by or prior to May 2017, as previously announced. [35014/16]

603. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health if there is a plan or schedule in place for training current staff for the transition to the new emergency department in University Hospital Limerick, Dooradoyle; and if it will be ensured that everyday operations do not interfere with this timeline to open the new emergency department in the hospital. [35015/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 600 to 603, inclusive, together.

As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Hospital Services**

604. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health when funding will be provided for the Mid-Western Regional Hospital in order that transcatheter aortic valve implant, TAVI, can be provided for public patients, especially since the TAVI procedure has proven to be a successful method of replacing heart valves by threading through the blood vessels in a non-invasive alternative to open heart surgery. [35114/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Hospital Appointments Delays**

605. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare who has had two appointments for a biopsy cancelled, will have the procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35116/16]

**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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

606. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35121/16]

**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.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

607. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35125/16]

**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.

### Hospital Services

608. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health if the appropriate resources have been made available by his Department to University Hospital Limerick, Dooradoyle, to ensure the new emergency department will be open by or prior to May 2017 or if additional resources will be needed during this transition. [35128/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Increased funding will be made available to the University of Limerick Hospitals Group in 2017, to facilitate the opening of the new Emergency Department at University Hospital Limerick. The HSE National Service Plan 2017, which will be finalised shortly, will set out the detail of the additional funding.

### **Medical Card Administration**

609. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the situation regarding persons with a medical card who have to pay €25 per month; if this covers a 28 day period or a full calendar month in view of the fact that most months have 30 or 31 days; if the €25 only covers the 28 day period, if it effectively means there are a minimum of 13 months in the year when a person has to pay €25 in respect of each period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35129/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration and operation of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Nursing Home Beds Data**

610. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the current bed capacity of Lifford residential care unit; and its current bed occupancy rate. [35130/16]

611. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the current bed capacity of Ramelton residential care unit and its current bed occupancy rate. [35131/16]

612. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the current bed capacity of St. Joseph's, Stranorlar residential care unit and its current bed occupancy rate. [35132/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee) (Deputy Helen McEntee):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 610 to 612, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### **Nursing Home Accommodation Provision**

613. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the estimated total cost of the proposed new Letterkenny community nursing unit; and the amount of this which will be provided from exchequer funding. [35133/16]

614. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for the building of the proposed new Letterkenny community nursing unit; if and when a competitive tendering contract for its building will take place; if a contract has been awarded for its construction; and

if so, the details of same. [35134/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee) (Deputy Helen McEntee):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 613 and 614 together.

The Capital Programme announced earlier this year provides for the replacement and refurbishment of 90 public nursing homes across the country over the next five years. This includes provision for a new CNU at Letterkenny by 2021 at an estimated cost of €22.75m. This will replace existing beds where the physical environment requires significant improvement.

The costs included to date in the above Capital Programme are indicative only and will be refined as detailed work advances. This work includes include appraisal, project brief, design feasibility, the review of costing estimates and finalisation of financing. A contract has yet to be awarded in respect of this project.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

615. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a needs assessment by a multidisciplinary team; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35138/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Delays**

616. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite hospital appointments in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35153/16]

**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 scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

## Pharmacy Services

617. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if his Department has a structure in place to provide weekend pharmacy cover in rural areas where the only pharmacy stores are often closed from Saturday afternoon until Monday morning; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35159/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration and operation of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

## HSE Documents

618. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the circumstances which led to the production of a reported memo issued to nurses regarding the removal of public patients from hospital beds; the person or persons responsible for approving the issuing of this memo; the steps which will be taken to establish accountability for this error; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35171/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** On 27 October it came my attention that a memo of legal advice had been issued within the HSE, regarding the removal of patients who no longer require acute hospital beds. This memo was provided by the HSE's legal advisors to the National Director for Acute Hospitals. Immediately on becoming aware of the existence of this memo, the Department contacted the HSE who confirmed that it had been rescinded. I have already stated publicly that the memo was offensive and unacceptable and is utterly out of line with Government policy with respect to the care of patients and our vision for the health service.

The HSE has apologised and confirmed that the memo does not reflect the policy of the HSE. It is not in accordance with the HSE's espoused values of care, compassion and trust. It was written as legal advice and should never have been circulated at hospital and staff level.

The HSE is focussed on implementing the Winter Initiative 2016-2017, which it published on 9 September last. The Initiative provides €40 million of additional funding to manage the expected winter surge in demand for hospital care. The Initiative is primarily focussed on facilitating timely discharge from hospital, striking a balance between hospital avoidance measures, such as community intervention teams, supporting patient flow through acute hospitals and increasing the availability of social care services.

## Pharmaceutical Sector

619. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to a media report (details supplied) if he will report on all moneys paid by the pharmaceutical industry to the HSE, the Department of Health or any agencies under the auspices, in each of the past five years; and the circumstances and purpose of these payments. [35172/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The only payments received by my Department from the pharmaceutical industry over the past five years are licence fees under the Misuse of Drugs Acts as set out below:



Year - €

2011 -101,483.01

2012 - 79,219.20

2013 - 106,512.75

2014 - 66,181.05

2015 - 127,974.05

I have requested the HSE and the other agencies under the auspices of my Department to reply directly to the Deputy with this information.

### Pharmaceutical Sector

620. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health his views on the appropriateness or otherwise of the pharmaceutical industry providing payments to doctors within the public health service; his views on whether such payments constitute a significant conflict of interest; his views on the Government policy in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35173/16]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I am aware of recent media reports on this issue and have asked my Department to consider whether any additional guidance or measures may be merited, in order to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded in all respects. I have also asked the Director General of the HSE to remind all senior health service staff of their legal obligations, particularly under the Ethics in Public Office Acts and also of their obligations under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and to consider whether any additional guidance may be merited in respect of interaction between individual employees, their employing authority and commercial interests.

It is important, nonetheless, to appreciate that that engagement between clinicians and the pharmaceutical industry is a necessity and is central to excellence in clinical care as well as research. Such engagement must of course comply with the relevant regulations, ethical guidance and public service codes of conduct.

The Medicinal Products (Control of Advertising) Regulations 2007 govern the advertising of medicines, and provide for a range of restrictions on gifts, hospitality and sponsorship of meetings. For example, a gift must be inexpensive and relevant to the practice of medicine or pharmacy. Hospitality must be reasonable in level, strictly limited to the main purpose or scientific objective of the event, and not extended to persons other than health professionals. Health professionals are also prohibited from soliciting or accepting any prohibited inducement, hospitality or sponsorship. Breaches of the Regulations may be prosecuted in the courts under section 32 of the Irish Medicines Board Acts 1996 and 2006.

Regulation of the medical profession is undertaken by the Medical Council, which updated its *Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners* in May 2016. While the Guide is not a legal code, it sets out the principles of professional practice and conduct that all doctors registered with the Medical Council are expected to follow.

The Guide advises that doctors “should not accept gifts (including hospitality) from pharmaceutical, medical devices or other commercial enterprises”. However, it further states that this does not prevent practitioners attending educational meetings or receiving payment of rea-

sonable fees for professional services to commercial enterprises”. The Guide directs doctors to tell patients and any other relevant party about any professional relationship they may have with pharmaceutical companies in order to show that they are acting without influence from commercial enterprise. It also gives advice on how any funding received should be channelled to avoid conflict of interest.

All State Bodies under the aegis of my Department, including the HSE and voluntary hospitals established under the Health (Corporate Bodies) Act 1961, must comply with relevant legislation such as the Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 to 2001, which set out statutory obligations that apply to Board members and public sector employees. In addition, they must comply with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform’s Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme Administration**

621. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the details of the changes to the nursing home support scheme in budget 2017, particularly in respect of farm assets; when the new measures are to be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35191/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee):** The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS) is a system of financial support for those in need of long-term nursing home care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their income and assets while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings. A financial assessment is carried out by the HSE to determine how much a participant in the Scheme will contribute to the cost of their care. The Programme for a Partnership Government has committed to reviewing the NHSS to remove any discrimination against small businesses and family farms.

When the NHSS 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. Arising out of the Review, a number of key issues have been identified for more detailed consideration across Departments and Agencies, including the treatment of business and farm assets for the purposes of the financial assessment element of the Scheme. This work is currently under way and the IFA has made a submission in this context to the Interdepartmental Group which is overseeing the Review. Changes arising from this Review may require legislative implementation.

### **Forestry Sector**

622. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will investigate the feasibility and potential benefits of implementing a system by which a private company may purchase carbon credits from private forestry owners for the purpose of reducing their carbon credit rating; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34497/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Under the European Commission’s LULUCF proposal (COM 479) flexibility to use credits from the land use, land-use change and forestry is envisaged to meet Member State’s compliance targets under the proposed Effort Sharing Regulation for the period 2021-2030. This use would apply at national level. There is no proposal to extend the use of LULUCF credits for compliance by individual companies who fall within the scope of the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). In order for such use to occur it would require agreement at EU level to change and extend the current

proposals. At individual forest level it would entail considerable measurement and monitoring of forest carbon stocks over an extended period of several decades, including the need to track levels of harvest and account for emissions associated with these removals. At present carbon stock change estimates for the forest sector are based on national data sources including the sample-based National Forest Inventory.

My Department therefore does not envisage the introduction of such a scheme as that described by the Deputy for individual companies falling within the ETS. The UK Woodland Carbon Code for example is one such scheme that my Department has been examining. This model provides a mechanism whereby industry can invest in the creation of new forests and be associated with the climate mitigation benefits this delivers. The Department will continue to look at the possibilities that might exist in this area.

### Single Payment Scheme Data

623. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of single farm payment entitlements currently held under lease agreement in tabular form; the number of agreements entered into in 2016 to date; the total value of these payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34913/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The information sought is set out in tabular form below.

| -   | Number of Entitlements | Value of Entitlements |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Total number of Basic Payment Scheme Entitlements currently held under lease agreements to date.                                  | 133,148                | €26.8m                |
| Entitlements entered into under the 2016 Basic Payment Scheme to date. This is based on 5,977 lease agreements processed to date. | 88,026                 | €18.5m                |

### Beef Industry

624. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the input Ireland has made or submitted to the European Commission to the cumulative impact assessment being undertaken on all EU beef offers in trade agreements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34408/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The European Commission did not seek formal input from Member States to its cumulative impact assessment, although officials from my Department, together with Teagasc colleagues, met the Commission early in the process to gain an understanding of the approach to be taken in conducting the analysis and to offer our advice.

However, Ireland was instrumental in bringing about the impact assessment in the first place, as it played a leading role in calling for such a study to be carried out, and in ensuring that no beef tariff rate quota was included in the exchange of offers between the EU and the Mercosur bloc in May of this year. I was very active at that time in highlighting the potentially very damaging impact of a Mercosur deal on the European agriculture sector, and on the beef sector in particular. I raised the issue continuously with Commissioners Malmström and Hogan, both

within the Council of Agriculture Ministers and in written form.

I will continue with these efforts as required, and I will ensure that the results of the Commission's impact assessment are fully taken into account in the approach to future FTA negotiations.

### **Agriculture Industry**

625. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the input Ireland has made or submitted to the European Commission to the agricultural markets task force to improve the position of farmers in the food chain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34409/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In the context of Ireland's ongoing response over the last eighteen months to the difficulties experienced on agricultural markets, I have made our position clear at Agriculture Council on the range of issues considered by the Agricultural Markets Task Force. In terms of direct input, officials from my Department, along with those from other Member States, met with the Task Force in September to reiterate these points and to respond to questions from the Task Force on issues such as the operation of market safety net measures and the means by which greater transparency could be brought to the functioning of the food supply chain.

We highlighted the fact that free and fair competition must be the prerequisite for a sustainable food supply chain, accompanied by balanced relationships between all of the entities along the chain. We also emphasised that operators along the supply chain should acknowledge their interdependence with each other, and to work together to develop a model which sustains agricultural production, without which none of the downstream industrial or service sectors could exist.

With regard to unfair trading practices, we considered that an EU-wide legislative framework would be a very useful step, as voluntary arrangements in our experience had proven to be of limited effectiveness, and the Single Market required legislative frameworks in order to function well and freely. We also considered that measures to reduce cost, improve competitiveness and support innovation would be required in order to improve the longer-term sustainability of the food supply chain.

On price observatories and market transparency, we drew attention to the fact that knowledge of market pricing in the EU is quite limited. Producer returns at primary level are quite well publicised, retail prices are also known but there is little data on the basis on which they are constructed. We said we would welcome efforts to improve transparency at processor and retailer levels in this regard.

I took the opportunity to highlight these points during the informal Agriculture Ministers meeting in Bratislava in September, which also focused on the question of how to improve farmers' position in the food supply chain.

### **EU Agreements**

626. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps that have been taken at European Council of Ministers level to agree a common EU framework on rules governing the food chain, considering the recent failure to find agree-

ment on a definition of an unfair trading practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34410/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The issue of a common EU framework to help deal with unfair trading practices has been discussed in recent months by the Council of Agriculture Ministers in the context of strengthening the position of farmers in the food supply chain, which has in turn been raised repeatedly by EU Member States as we have dealt with the difficulties that have beset agricultural markets over the last eighteen months. Indeed, the importance of the need to strengthen farmers' position in the food supply chain led to the establishment last January of the Agricultural Markets Task Force, which presented its report to the Agri-Fish Council in Brussels earlier today.

More particularly as regards unfair trading practices, the Slovak Presidency made "strengthening the position of farmers in the food supply chain" the topic of its informal meeting in Bratislava in September. I took the opportunity to again emphasise Ireland's view in relation to the usefulness of having an EU-wide legislative framework governing unfair trading practices.

While many of the points raised by Ireland, including in relation to unfair trading practices, appear to have been addressed in the Task Force's report, I look forward to considering its contents in detail in due course. I also look forward to the Commission's follow-up actions over the coming period.

## **EU Budgets**

627. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps that have been taken at Council of European Ministers level regarding the future EU financial framework beyond 2020 and the vital funding provided to farmers under CAP; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34411/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The debate on the future EU financial framework beyond 2020 is one that is only commencing, and from an agriculture perspective it is one that will of course be closely linked to the debate on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy.

It is clear from the preliminary, and largely informal, discussions that have taken place to date, that expenditure on the CAP will come under close scrutiny. Indeed, in the more formal discussions that have started on the mid-term review of the current financial framework up to 2020, the Commission's communication includes advance notice of the need to evaluate expenditure on, particularly, the cohesion and CAP budgets, particularly in light of the new demands that are emerging in the areas of, for example, migration and security. We have responded to this very directly by stating our concerns about such an approach, and by emphasising the key role that the CAP will continue to play into the future in achieving important EU strategic objectives in the areas of, for example, jobs and growth, and dealing with the challenge of climate change.

A formal communication in relation to the post-2020 EU budget is not expected from the Commission until late 2017 or early 2018. However, Ireland will in the interim continue to promote the relevance and effectiveness of CAP expenditure, and will strongly defend the need for a budget that matches the strong ambitions for the CAP in the post-2020 negotiations.

## **Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme**



628. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if full approval will be provided under TAMS II for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34456/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named submitted an application for grant-aid under the Dairy Equipment Scheme in TAMS II on 26 August 2015. The applicant has completed the investment works and submitted an application for payment on line. However, there are some outstanding issues to be resolved with the application before the payment can issue. These issues have been raised directly with the applicant concerned and once resolved payment will issue to the applicant.

### **Greyhound Industry**

629. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a breakdown of the number of persons employed in the greyhound industry in tabular form (details supplied). [34465/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** As the Deputy refers the figures currently available from Bord na gCon (BnG) are based on a report by Jim Power Economic Consultants entitled 'The Economic & Financial Significance of the Irish Greyhound Industry' commissioned by BnG and published in April 2011. These are the most up to date figures available to me. That report indicates that more than 10,000 people are employed directly and indirectly in the greyhound sector and that the wage bill generated by that employment is estimated at approximately €207m per annum.

While the compilation of this data was a major undertaking I am aware that the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Agriculture, Food and the Marine has recommended that the exercise be revisited.

I think that this would be useful and I intend arranging a further study of the economic contribution of the industry in due course.

### **Rural Development Programme Data**

630. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a breakdown between total expenditure incurred to date in 2016 and the annual amount of funds originally allocated to schemes (details supplied) under the rural development programme 2014-2020 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34467/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out below:

Of the schemes listed by the Deputy the Horticulture Industry and Development of the Organic Sector schemes are not in RDP 2014-2020 while no allocation was made for the Knowledge Transfer Scheme in 2016.

It is important to note that the bulk of expenditure in respect of BDGP, GLAS and other schemes will take place in December 2016.



| Title of Scheme                                   | 2016 allocation€000 | 2016 Outturn – 14 Nov.€000 |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme                | 202,000             | 194,950                    |
| Beef Data and Genomics Programme                  | 52,000              | 27,309                     |
| AEOS  | 40,850              | 13,605                     |
| GLAS  | 142,000             | 5,260                      |
| Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme        | 35,800              | 4,553                      |
| Early Retirement Scheme                           | 5,016               | 3,814                      |
| Organic Farming Schemes                           | 10,000              | 2,522                      |
| REPS (including Agricultural Catchment Programme) | 2,194               | 2,488                      |
| Locally Led Environmental Schemes (Burren)        | 1,200               | 952                        |
| Technical assistance                              | 1,000               | 687                        |
| Collaborative Farming                             | 500                 | 220                        |
| Speciality Foods Scheme                           | 989                 | 10                         |
| Targeted Advisory Service for Animal Disease      | 700                 | 74                         |
| Totals  | 494,249             | 256,444                    |

### Appointments to State Boards

631. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the action he will take in relation to an appointment of a person (details supplied); when he will take action; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34484/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I will be bringing forward the heads of a Greyhound Industry Bill shortly to deal with issues relating to governance, regulation and enforcement. This legislation will include inter alia, defined periods for board appointments and a process of board rotation and renewal as outlined in the Indecon report.

The appointment referred to by the Deputy was conducted through a competitive process managed by the Public Appointments Service.

### Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Applications

632. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application under the ANC scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34493/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** An application under the 2016 Areas of Natural Constraints Schemes was received from the person named on 16 May 2015. Processing of the application has recently been finalised and payment will issue to the nominated bank account of the person named shortly.

## Commonage Land Use

633. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the Commonage Implementation Committee last met. [34494/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The last meeting of the Commonage Implementation Committee was held on 27 November 2015. A meeting of the committee will be convened once a new chairperson has been appointed.

## Appointments to State Boards

634. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a new chairperson will be appointed to the Commonage Implementation Committee. [34495/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Proposals regarding the terms of appointment of a new independent chairperson have been submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for approval and it is expected that a chairperson will be appointed shortly.

## Forestry Management

635. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the felling of up to 30 mature oak trees in 2015 in a heritage woodland which had been specifically detailed for protection in a licence (details supplied) issued by the forest service. [34500/16]

636. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the felling of a 100-year old sequoia tree this spring in a heritage woodland in County Longford when the forest service had been assured by the licensed operator (details supplied) that no sequoia trees would be felled. [34501/16]

637. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a felling licence for an ancient broadleaf woodland was issued without the standard consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (details supplied) when two other licences in this location were so referred.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34502/16]

638. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason as a result of complaints received, felling was suspended in an ancient woodland in County Longford on 24 March 2016, permitted to continue on 12 April 2016, and then halted again on 12 May 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34503/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 635 to 638, inclusive, together.

Between 17th April 2014 and 23rd September 2015, three felling licence applications were submitted to my Department and approved in respect of the lands in question. These were as follows:

The first licence was for the thinning of 27.76 hectares and clearfell of a further 7.43ha.

The second was for the thinning of 66.32 hectares.

The third licence was for the thinning of 14.34 hectares.

The applications were processed by the administrative and inspectorate staff in my Department. In relation to the first two licences, as the area proposed for felling intersected with a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA), the views of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) were sought.

The area covered by the third licence lies outside of the SAC and SPA and involved thinning. In these situations, referral to NPWS is at the discretion of the Forest Service, and it was deemed unnecessary in this case.

In March 2016, concerns about the felling were raised with the Department and at the request of the Forest Service operations ceased on site for the areas relating to the second and third licence. At that time, felling within the first licence area had been completed. Following discussions with the contractor and further site assessments by the Forest Service, NPWS and an ornithologist engaged by the operator, the Forest Service was satisfied that the operations were appropriate and that the licenses issued were in keeping with agreed procedures. The request to cease operations was lifted on 12th April, conditional upon stated requirements. A speedy resumption and completion of the felling work was sought in order to have the work completed before possible nesting began. On 11th May, work on the site ceased and was scheduled to resume at the end of the Summer.

A basis for lifting the request to cease operations on the 12th April was the commitment of the contractor to retain sequoia onsite within the area of the second licence (unless overriding health and safety concerns arose). There was no condition on the original general felling licence that required the retention of that specific species.

In recent days, the Department received a report that sequoia trees had been felled on site. The Forest Service inspected the site on the 9th

November and noted that three sequoia stumps were observed in one of the two areas within which these trees are present, as previously indicated by the contractor. In the opinion of the Forest Service Inspector the three sequoia appeared to have been felled in spring or very early summer and it appeared that the felled sequoia were quite likely to have been dominated by larger sequoias, as there continues to be a closed canopy following the removal of the trees. Following this inspection, the contractor was contacted and he explained that three small sequoias were felled for the following reasons;

- They were suppressed by the dominant sequoia overhead and therefore had little or no living crown remaining;
- They were either dead or dying;
- They represented a health and safety risk.

The Forest Service has not received any complaint regarding the felling of oak on this site. Any information regarding possible illegal felling should be forwarded to the Felling Licence Section, Johnstown Castle Estate, Wexford.

### **Transfer of Entitlements Application**

639. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application for entitlements in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he

will make a statement on the matter. [34526/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named submitted a 2016 Transfer of Entitlements application seeking the transfer of entitlements by Inheritance. One of the supporting documents relating to the Inheritance of entitlements which was submitted to my Department was not legible in part and it was necessary to contact the person named to have a clearer copy of the document submitted. My Department has now received the requested documentation. The application is currently being processed and further clarification has been sought in relation to the Inheritance documentation. Once this clarification is received the application will be finalised with a view to payment issuing shortly thereafter.

### **Harbours and Piers Development**

640. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of previously suggested proposals to install a breakwater at Greencastle Harbour in County Donegal; if consideration is being actively given to the plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34583/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Greencastle Harbour is owned by Donegal County Council and responsibility for its development, repair and maintenance rests with that Local Authority in the first instance and its' parent Department, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

My Department however provides limited funding to assist Local Authorities carry out small scale projects for the development and repair of Local Authority owned piers, harbours and slipways under the annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme subject to available Exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

The primary focus of the Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Capital Development Programme which the Department administers on an annual basis is to provide funding for capital works at the six Fishery Harbour Centres for which my Department has responsibility.

Any application submitted by Donegal County Council in respect of Greencastle Harbour under a future Local Authority capital programme, will be given consideration in the context of the criteria set out, available Exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

### **Agriculture Scheme Applications**

641. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a single farm payment in respect of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34602/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named submitted a 2016 Basic payment/Areas of Natural Constraint scheme application on 14 March 2016. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases remote sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a remote sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection has now been completed and the results have been finalised. Payments due under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue to the nominated bank account of the person

named shortly.

### **Agriculture Scheme Eligibility**

642. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34616/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Applications in respect of the 2014 Single Farm Payment and 2015 Basic Payment Schemes were recently received from the person named together with supporting documentation for review. It has been decided to waive the late penalties in this case and payment in respect of the 2014 Single Farm Payment will issue in the coming days.

In light of the above decision, my Department will now examine this case with a view to establishing entitlements and issuing payment under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme.

### **Land Parcel Identification System**

643. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on reports that the new system for land digitisation replacing Ordnance Survey maps is causing huge irregularities and in some cases errors for engineers carrying out their work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34655/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) is the Department's spatial database that underpins area based payments to over 125,000 farmers. This system holds records (digitised parcels) for over 1 million land parcels. The system as operated by this Department is not a replacement for Ordnance Survey maps, but works in a complementary fashion. It is designed and operated to ensure payments are made in a timely manner to farmers while also ensuring robust controls are in place to ensure the validity of payments.

Ordnance Survey maps at a scale similar to the LPIS (1:5000) typically show each individual field on the farm as a distinct parcel. The LPIS can have multiple fields in a single parcel and this can vary depending on the specific schemes that farmers apply for. While both datasets are similar they have been designed with different end uses in mind.

While the Department constantly strives to update and improve all data that we use, there is no new system for land digitisation in place.

### **GLAS Issues**

644. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans for SAC farmland in terms of recent cuts to GLAS; the future EU funding for SAC farmland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34664/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** There have not been any cuts to the GLAS scheme. On the contrary I recently launched a third tranche of GLAS (GLAS 3) with a view to increasing participation levels from the 38,000 farmers approved into the Scheme under GLAS 1 and GLAS 2 to at least 50,000 in 2017.

Farmers with designated SAC farmland who apply for GLAS are given priority access to the scheme.

The Burren Farming Programme, a locally led Agri-Environment scheme (LLAES), also supports farmers with SAC land and further LLAES, including additional support for designated Hen Harrier areas, will be rolled out by my Department as part of the current Rural Development Programme.

### **Agriculture Scheme Applications**

645. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34903/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named submitted a 2016 Basic payment/ Areas of Natural Constraint scheme's application on 16 May 2016. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases remote sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a remote sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection is currently being processed with the intention of issuing any payments due as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

### **Transfer of Entitlements Application**

646. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will ensure that a transfer of entitlements is processed as soon as possible for a person (details supplied) in view of the fact that it is impossible for the requested information to be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34959/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named submitted a 2016 Transfer of Entitlements application to my Department seeking the transfer of entitlements by Inheritance. Additional documentation required to process this application was sought from the Representatives of the deceased on 13th October 2016. Following clarification regarding the additional information, all outstanding issues were resolved to allow for the application to be finalised. Acceptance letters have issued on 11th November 2016 and payment is due to issue in the coming days.

### **Bord na gCon Administration**

647. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if any failures of drug tests were recorded in relation to a race (details supplied); the details of any recorded failures and follow up sanctions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34962/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** This administration of greyhound races is an operational matter for Bord na gCon.



Under regulations in place for drug test results received during September 2015, adverse findings at races are referred to the Control Committee for consideration and if upheld, the results of those hearings are published. Results for the 2015 Irish Derby are dealt with under this legal framework, and any adverse findings upheld by the Control Committee will be published.

Under new regulations published by Bord na gCon, adverse findings at races from October 2015 onwards will be published prior to consideration by the Control Committee, and the outcome of Control Committee deliberations, whether positive or negative, will also be published. This brings additional transparency to the process.

I consider it to be of critical importance that there is as much transparency as possible around drug testing in greyhound racing and I intend to ensure that this principle is enshrined in the heads of a Greyhound Bill currently being prepared in my department.

### **Basic Payment Scheme Applications**

648. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) has received no BPS payment to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34967/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named submitted a 2016 Transfer of Entitlements application to my Department seeking the transfer of entitlements by Change of Registration Details of Herd Number.

As the herd number shown had been changed into joint names after the submission of the 2016 Basic Payment Scheme application, it was necessary to have a Declaration of Undertaking form completed in order to allow the transfer application to be processed.

A letter issued with a Declaration of Undertaking form to the person named on the 4th October 2016. To date the completed Declaration of Undertaking form has not been received by my Department. Once the completed form is returned the application will be further processed with a view to payment issuing as soon as possible thereafter.

### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

649. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if, in view of the plans in Food Harvest 2025 to expand food output, in particular in the dairy sector, and the findings of the recent RDS and IIEA report (details supplied), his Department examined recent scientific advances in the area of methane emissions reductions in the herd; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34998/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** There is a whole of Government approach to climate policy as set out in the National Climate Policy Position. Officials from my Department work very closely with other Departments and in particular, with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment which is the lead in this area.

The IIEA report is a valuable contribution to the research and will help to inform a coherent and cost-effective policy to meet the twin challenges of sustainable food production and climate change in the agriculture and land use sector. The policy is based on an approach to carbon neutrality in the agriculture and land-use sector, including forestry, which does not compromise capacity for sustainable food production.

Through the deployment of innovative and efficient practices at farm level, combined with the application of emerging scientific knowledge, Ireland can take the necessary steps towards addressing the challenge of greenhouse gas emissions, including methane, in the Irish agriculture sector. In the Rural Development Programme, there are some 38,000 farmers taking part in the Green Low carbon Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS) and 24,000 herds are in the Beef Data Genomics Programme, which is a world-leading initiative to improve the quality of breeding of our beef cattle.

Under the 2015 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, a National Mitigation Plan is being prepared. This work is overseen by Government through a hierarchy of committees and sub-groups, with independent advice from the Climate Change Advisory Council. These committees and groups include the Cabinet Committee and Senior Officials' Group on Infrastructure, Environment and Climate Action, a Technical Research and Modelling Group and a Domestic Climate Finance Group.

Food Wise 2025 – the strategic plan for the sustainable development of agri-food sector over the next decade - provides a framework for the agri sector to engage with the national mitigation plan. Food Wise builds on its predecessor and focuses on the continued growth in the value of Irish agri-food including dairy production. While this is likely to mean some increase in dairy numbers, it is not expected that there will be a significant increase in overall cattle numbers.

There is a strong commitment in Food Wise 2025 to measure and monitor the sustainability credentials of the sector. As part of the implementation of Food Wise, an Environmental Sustainability Committee has been established. This implementation process will include evaluation and assessment of the delivery of sustainability and mitigation actions.

My Department continues to invest in and engage with research initiatives to further assist with the refinement, development and deployment of new and innovative practices to reduce GHGs that are associated with agricultural production.

### **GLAS Payments**

650. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a GLAS payment will issue to a person (details supplied). [35115/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named is a participant in GLAS tranche 1 and has been paid his 2015 payment. In relation to payment for 2016, the first instalment of the 2016 payment to 38,000 approved GLAS 1 and GLAS 2 farmers are due to start issuing towards the end of the year when all the required application validation checks have been completed.

### **TAMS Administration**

651. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties that have arisen for some applicants under the sheep fencing scheme TAMS II where farmers were told in advance of submitting the application that it was not necessary to have sheep at that time and where applications are now being disallowed on the basis of not having sheep on the farm holding at the time of application; if he will ensure that this unacceptable change in criteria will be reversed without further delay and that all applications that met with the relevant criteria at the time of submitting the applications

will be approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35163/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Sheep fencing for sheep farmers was introduced in the third tranche of the TAMS II Scheme.

All applications received for sheep fencing have been reviewed. Proof of a minimum of 40 sheep (ewes or store lambs) will be required to be on the holding before the approval of a payment claim. As required under all TAMS measures, farmers will be required to use the investment for the purposes for which it was intended for a period of five years from the date of payment for the investment.

### **GLAS Administration**

652. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide all the actions in tiers 1, 2 and 3 that were available in GLAS 1 and GLAS 2 that will not be available in GLAS 3, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35177/16]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The third tranche of GLAS, GLAS 3 opened to applications on 4 November 2016 and will remain open for applications for a six week period. All of the actions that were available for selection under GLAS 2 continue to be available under GLAS 3. A number of technical changes have been made including an update of mapping information which will be of benefit to some applicants.

### **Waste Tyre Disposal**

653. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding the new tyre compliance scheme which will replace the TRACS system in 2017; the new charge per tyre; if he will address the concerns of retailers here that this will drive business north of the Border and not allow retailers here to be competitive (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34449/16]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** As part of a wider review of producer responsibility compliance schemes in Ireland, a specific module examined the structural and environmental effectiveness of all aspects of the system for managing waste tyres. 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
- that between 25% and 50% of waste tyres were not accounted for.

The report recommended, inter alia, that the scope of the existing schemes should be changed to improve the environmentally sound management of waste tyres.

Following extensive discussions with the tyre industry, the then Minister announced, in January 2015, his decision to put in place new structures for tyres and waste tyres in Ireland. The new compliance scheme will include the following features among others:

- A single mandatory compliance scheme for end-of-life tyres
- The removal of the option for tyre operators to self-comply with their regulatory obligations
- Formalisation of an existing environmental charge into a visible environmental management charge (vEMC) to ensure that charges that are already being paid by customers are used for their intended purpose.

Repak ELT have been appointed to operate the new compliance scheme to replace the existing TRACS.

The new structures will be underpinned by new Regulations which I expect to have in place early in 2017. The regulations will set a vEMC for various tyre categories. An indicative vMC for a car tyre of €2.80 has already been announced. The vEMC for other tyre categories, including agricultural tyres, have yet to be determined. When setting these fees, I will take advice from the Tyres Working Group on which all tyre stakeholders are represented.

This vEMC is not a new charge but rather the formalisation of an existing charge that consumers already pay to their tyre retailer whenever they buy a new tyre. This will be more transparent for a consumer than the current arrangement. The charge will be a front loaded charge which will be applied by any producer placing a tyre on the market in Ireland. The charge will be passed down the supply chain and ultimately paid by the consumer.

I am very conscious of concerns in relation to market distortion. In this regard, distance sellers, i.e. those placing tyres on the Irish market but located outside the State, will have the same obligations as any operator based in Ireland. In addition tyres will be a priority area for enforcement in 2017 for the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities (WERLAs) and I will be asking them to give particular attention to the border regions.

### **Waste Disposal Charges**

654. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the report on the progress and meaningful discussion which was to take place with the interdepartmental group and the groups representing persons with disabilities in respect of bin waivers-part waivers in advance of the pay by weight bin charges which come into effect on 1 July 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35170/16]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** An interdepartmental working group, established in line with national waste policy to report to Government with options to minimise the impact of waste charges on low income households, submitted two reports to the previous Government. It should be noted that there has never been a national waiver scheme for household waste collection. During the period in which local authorities were directly involved in the collection of household waste, a minority of individual Councils offered different levels of discount to selected households, based on different qualification criteria. As local authorities exited the waste collection market, some required the private operators which took on the Councils' customers to provide a level of discount for existing waiver customers only, and even then, for only a limited time. The vast majority of such contractual commitments for private operators to provide a waiver have now expired. In that context, the number of households in receipt of waiver discounts is likely to decline over time, especially as some householders were able to take advantage of special reduced offers elsewhere which actually undercut the waiver price. However, selected private operators still offer some level of discount to former waiver customers on a voluntary basis. With the

exception of one or two municipal districts, local authorities no longer collect waste. Waste collection is now serviced by a diverse range of private operators, where the fees charged are a matter between the service provider and customer and the range of services and fees offered vary amongst providers and across the country. In that regard, it became increasingly apparent that a national waiver scheme could not be imposed in the context of an open market for waste collection.

A mandatory pay-by-weight charging structure for household waste collection was due to be introduced in mid-2016. The waste management industry had committed, on a voluntary basis, to providing a full weight allowance for the disposal of non-infancy incontinency wear to patients supplied with such products by the HSE, if a mandatory pay-by-weight per kilogramme charging system was introduced for household waste collection. However, on 30 June 2016, regulations were signed to remove the requirement for mandatory pay-by-weight charging structure. Notwithstanding the above, as previously stated, a review of the pricing structures that households are charged for the collection of waste, with a focus on encouraging households to prevent, separate and recycle waste and to reduce residual waste going to landfills, is due to be completed by July next year. The issue of household non-infancy incontinency waste will be considered as part of this review.

### **Local Authority Funding**

655. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the funding that will be made available to Galway County Council for the purpose of developing a recycling centre in Casla, Connemara, which has been planned by them in conjunction with Údarás na Gaeltachta; the steps that need to be taken to apply and draw down such funding; and the amount of the cost his Department would fund. [34509/16]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):**

Considerable investment was made in recycling facilities and their operation at local authority level between the years 2000 and 2015. These funding streams were brought to a close as a result of declining demand for further facilities from local authorities and reduced available financial resources. There is currently no funding support available for developments of this type.

Under the NDP 2007-2013 Waste Recycling Capital Grants Scheme and the previous scheme, which operated between 2000 and 2006, the then Department of Environment, Community and Local Government provided capital grant assistance of over €100 million to local authorities for the development of waste recycling infrastructure. Projects developed under the schemes included bring banks, composting facilities, materials recovery facilities, civic amenity sites and biological treatment facilities. As a result, the number of civic amenity facilities has risen to over 118; and the number of bring banks to more than 1,922.

Support for operating costs at recycling facilities was also made available to local authorities for a number of years by the former department responsible. The scheme made funding available for the purpose of running recycling reception centres. However, the scheme was closed in 2015. The payments made in October 2015 for the period January to June 2015 were the final tranche of payments to be made under this scheme. The County and City Management Association were informed in writing of this development in March 2016 and a further letter issued to the Regional Waste Co-ordinators in September 2016 confirming the closure of the above scheme.



## Broadband Service Provision

656. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the proposals there are to upgrade the broadband telecommunications infrastructure in an area (details supplied); if the requests of local residents and local business to have an adequate and modern broadband service provided in that area without further delay can be given urgent and favourable consideration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34520/16]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (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 Government commits to the delivery of the NBP as a matter of priority. This is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment by the telecommunications sector and a State intervention in those areas where commercial investment has not been fully demonstrated. The formal procurement process for the State Intervention commenced in December 2015.

To date, the commercial telecommunications sector has invested over €2bn in upgrading and modernising networks which support the provision of high speed broadband and mobile telecoms services.

Approximately 1.3m premises in Ireland can now get high speed broadband and at least one mobile operator is delivering 4G services to over 90% of the population. It is estimated that up to 42% of premises in Co. Monaghan will have access to commercial high speed broadband services provided by telecommunications operators, while the remaining 58% consisting of just over 19,000 premises in Co. Monaghan will fall within the proposed State led intervention under the National Broadband Plan.

The High Speed Broadband Map, which is available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie) shows the extent of the State Intervention area and provides information on a county by county basis with a breakdown of coverage across the townlands in every county including Co. Monaghan.

The maps shows that the townland of Drumhawan, Co. Monaghan falls within the AMBER area and will therefore be included in the State intervention procurement process. 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@dccae.gov.ie](mailto:broadband@dccae.gov.ie).

The Department is now in a formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network within the State Intervention Area comprising over 750,000 premises, covering 100,000km of road network and 96% of the land area of Ireland.

Intensive dialogue with bidders is continuing and the three bidders have indicated that they are proposing a predominantly fibre-to-the-home solution. Householders and businesses may get speeds not just of 30Megabits per second but potentially up to 1000 megabits per second with businesses potentially availing of symmetrical upload and download speeds.

Earlier this year, before I came into office, the Department announced that it would be June 2017 before contract(s) were awarded under the NBP. The bidders in the process have recently indicated that they may need more time to conclude the procurement process. The timing of each stage of the procurement continues to be dependent on a range of factors including the complexities that may be encountered by the procurement team, and bidders, during the procurement process. Bidders need adequate time to prepare detailed proposals and their final



formal bids and get the relevant shareholder and funding approvals at key stages of the process. It is also important to ensure that risks in this multi-million euro procurement are carefully managed. I do not propose to comment any further at this juncture, given that discussions are ongoing in the procurement process. I can assure the Deputy however, that the procurement process is being intensively managed, to ensure an outcome that delivers a future-proofed network that serves homes and businesses across Ireland, for at least 25 years. The Government considers the NBP to be one of the most significant investments in rural Ireland for decades, and one which will transform society, akin to rural electrification in the last century.

In parallel, and in accordance with commitments in the Programme for Government, Minister Humphreys is leading on the establishment of two regional action groups to help accelerate the broadband network build in rural Ireland, once a contract(s) has been awarded.

In July, I established a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce with my colleague Minister Humphreys to address immediate issues in relation to the quality of mobile phone and broadband coverage. I expect the Taskforce to report by end 2016.

I have also secured €8m for RTE which will allow it to free up the 700MHz spectrum band. In addition, I recently signed Regulations allowing ComReg to proceed with an early 2017 auction of the 3.6GHz radio spectrum band, to provide an 86% increase in total spectrum available for mobile and fixed wireless services.

These initiatives should assist in significantly improving the quality of broadband and mobile phone services across Ireland, putting Ireland to the forefront internationally in terms of connectivity.

### **Waste Disposal Charges**

657. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 1641 of 16 September 2016, if he will review correspondence regarding concerns on a waste company (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34524/16]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** My role as Minister is the maintenance and development of the policy and statutory framework within which the relevant environmental regulatory authorities viz the Environmental Protection Agency, local authorities, the National Waste Collection Permit Office and the National Transfrontier Shipments Office, discharge their respective regulatory and enforcement functions under the Waste Management Acts, in order to ensure that Ireland meets its legal obligations under waste legislation.

As I stated in reply to Question No. 1641 of 16 September 2016, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is the statutory independent body responsible for the enforcement of domestic and EU competition law in the State as well as matters pertaining to consumer protection. In line with the objectives of European and national waste policy, the European Union (Household Good Waste and Bio-Waste) Regulation 2015 were designed to promote the segregation and recovery of household waste and the correct use of 'black bins' and 'brown bins' to divert food waste from landfill and the opportunity for such waste to be presented for composting or anaerobic digestion or treatment in way that fulfils a high level of environmental protection.

## **Broadband Service Provision**

658. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to supply a high speed broadband service in an area (details supplied) in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34532/16]

659. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to supply a high speed broadband service to an area (details supplied) in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34534/16]

660. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to supply a high speed broadband service to an area (details supplied) in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34536/16]

661. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to supply a high speed broadband service to an area (details supplied) in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34537/16]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 658 to 661, inclusive, together.

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed services to every city, town, village and individual premises in Ireland. The Programme for Government commits to the delivery of the NBP as a matter of priority. This is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment by the telecommunications sector and through a State intervention in those areas where commercial investment has not been fully demonstrated. The formal procurement process for the State Intervention commenced in December 2015.

The procurement process aims to identify an entity or entities to build, rollout, operate and deliver high speed broadband of at least 30 Megabits per second upload and 6 Megabits per second download speeds to all premises within the intervention area. The three bidders in the procurement process have indicated that they are proposing a predominantly fibre-to-the-home solution for rural Ireland under the National Broadband plan intervention. Householders and businesses may avail of speeds not just of 30 Megabits per second but potentially 1000 Megabits per second, with businesses potentially availing of symmetrical upload and download speeds. This is a solution that will endure for 25 years and beyond.

The High Speed Broadband Map, which is available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie), shows the extent of the State Intervention area and provides information on a county by county basis with a breakdown of coverage across the townlands in every county including Co Louth. Individuals can check whether their premise 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@dccae.gov.ie](mailto:broadband@dccae.gov.ie).

The townlands of Ballagan and Whitestown, County Louth including the eircodes referred to by the Deputy fall within the AMBER area and will therefore be included in the State intervention procurement process. This means that the premises are not within a BLUE area receiving services from commercial broadband providers.

The rollout of services by commercial operators in the BLUE area is being kept under constant review by the Department to ensure that all premises can get access to services, either through commercial investment or the State intervention.

Over 750,000 premises are currently within the State intervention area. This includes over 15,000 premises in County Louth.

The Department is now in a formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network to over 750,000 premises in Ireland, covering 100,000km of road network and 96% of the land area of Ireland.

My Department continues to liaise closely with industry and relevant other Departments and agencies to assist in the commercial deployment of telecommunications networks. The commercial telecommunications sector has invested over €2bn in upgrading and modernising networks which support the provision of high speed broadband and mobile telecoms service, including parts of Co. Meath. These investments will further improve the coverage and quality of broadband and mobile voice and data services throughout the country.

In parallel, and in accordance with commitments in the Programme for Government, Minister Humphreys is leading on the establishment of two regional action groups to help accelerate the broadband network build in rural Ireland, once a contract(s) has been awarded.

In July, I established a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce with my colleague Minister Humphreys to address immediate issues in relation to the quality of mobile phone and broadband coverage. I expect the Taskforce to report by end 2016.

I recently signed Regulations allowing ComReg to proceed with an early 2017 auction of the 3.6GHz radio spectrum band, to provide an 86% increase in total spectrum available for mobile and fixed wireless services. I have also secured €8m for RTE which will allow it to free up the 700MHz spectrum band, to provide enhanced mobile services.

These initiatives should assist in significantly improving the quality of broadband and mobile phone services across Ireland including County Louth.

### **Inland Fisheries**

662. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to lift the salmon and the drift net ban; his further plans to carry out a further study in relation to salmon stocks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34543/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** The status of each of Ireland 147 individual salmon stocks is reviewed each year. The Standing Scientific Committee (SSC) for salmon provides independent advice to Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) as regards the annual individual stock assessments for Ireland's wild salmon fisheries. This independent scientific advice underpins the annual management decisions and advice of IFI as regards all aspects of the angling and commercial season for salmon on an individual river basis.

The SSC is a statutorily independent committee comprised of scientists from IFI, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, the Loughs Agency, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Marine Institute, the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (Northern Ireland), and other State bodies and third level institutions.

In 2006 a decision of the Government determined that the wild salmon fishery is to be managed in line with the scientific advice in the interests of conservation of stocks. Since 2007, the harvest of salmon, by commercial and recreational (angling) means, has been restricted to those individual river stocks that are meeting their conservation limits.

The individual river management strategy is based on the fact that each of Ireland's salmon rivers has its own unique stock of salmon which migrates to sea as juveniles and returns to the same river in adulthood to spawn and create the next generation of fish exclusive to that river. Fisheries are only considered in rivers where the estimated returns are above the conservation limit for the river.

The annual Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme Regulations, made pursuant to Sections 69 of the Inland Fisheries Act 2010, provide for the management of Ireland's wild salmon and sea trout fishery by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI). These Regulations are revised on an annual basis, taking account of advice from IFI, the SSC and any submissions received from a 30 day public consultation for the following season. I have already commenced the 30 day public consultation for the 2017 Regulations.

A copy of the draft regulations, which are available on the Department's website, [www.dccae.gov.ie](http://www.dccae.gov.ie), is open for public inspection at the offices of the Department in Cavan and also at the offices of Inland Fisheries Ireland. Any person may submit observations on the draft regulations at any time during the period of 30 days concluding on 11 December, 2016

The commercial (draftnet and snapnet) season commences in May each year and conservation measures for the fishery will be introduced in advance of the season under the Control of Fishing for Salmon Order and associated bye-laws.

### **Bord na Móna**

663. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the current situation whereby haulage for Bord na Móna has been outsourced; his views on the impact of this decision for current employees of the company; his plans to take action to secure the jobs with the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34805/16]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** Bord na Móna is a commercial State company operating under the Turf Development Acts 1946 to 1998 and industrial relation matters are the responsibility of the Board and management of the Company and not ones in which I, as Minister, have any role.

I am advised by Bord na Mona that the matter referred to has been passed to the Company's internal dispute resolution mechanism, the Joint Industrial Relations Council (JIRC). This Council was established as part of the wider agreement between management and Unions that was reached in February 2016 under the auspices of the Workplace Relations Commission.

### **Salmon Hardship Scheme**

664. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will consider a voluntary buy out scheme for snap net fishermen on the rivers Barrow, Nore, Suir and Slaney, if the fishermen were prepared to relinquish their licences in favour of compensation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34960/16]

665. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will consider a voluntary buy out scheme for drift net fisherman on the estuaries to the rivers Barrow, Nore and Suir, if the fisherman were prepared to relinquish their licences in favour of compensation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34961/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 664 and 665 together.

The Salmon Hardship Scheme was introduced following a Government decision in 2006 to cease, for conservation reasons, the commercial salmon mixed stock fishery. Under the scheme, fishermen active in the commercial salmon fishery, could opt to voluntarily cease fishing and undertake not to seek a licence in the future. Payments to individuals were based on verifiable track record and recorded catches in the five years prior to its introduction.

In excess of €25 million was allocated to the scheme to facilitate payments to fishermen, with a further €5 million provided for community development projects. The scheme closed for applications on 31 December 2007 and ceased in 2008. I understand that all funds were expended and there are currently no plans to revisit such a scheme.

### **Broadband Service Provision**

666. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will examine an issue (details supplied) regarding broadband in Cootehill; if this can be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34973/16]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The State can only intervene to ensure access to broadband services in cases of clear market failure.

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed services to every city, town, village and individual premises in Ireland. The Programme for Government commits to the delivery of the NBP as a matter of priority. This is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment by the telecommunications sector and a State intervention in those areas where commercial investment has not been fully demonstrated. The formal procurement process for the State Intervention commenced in December 2015.

The High Speed Broadband Map, which is available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie) shows the extent of the State Intervention area:

- The areas marked BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have previously indicated plans to deliver high speed broadband services.
- The areas marked AMBER on the High Speed Broadband Map represent the target areas for the State Intervention which are the subject of the current procurement process.

The map provides information on a county by county basis with a breakdown of coverage across the townlands in every county including Co. Cavan.

The maps shows that Cootehill in the townland of Killycramph is included in the BLUE area where commercial providers are either currently delivering or previously indicated that they have plans to deliver high speed broadband services. Individuals can check whether their premises is in a BLUE or an AMBER area by scrolling through the map online or entering their Eircode.

Investment decisions by the commercial electronic communications network infrastructure providers in that market, including the timing and location of infrastructure upgrades to make high speed broadband services available, are taken on commercial grounds by each network operator. Neither my Department nor the Commission for Communications Regulation, the independent market regulator, have statutory authority to oblige any particular network provider



to invest in the provision of upgraded broadband services.

My Department is however actively monitoring the deployment plans in the BLUE area. Direct feedback from consumers is important and if customers in Cootehill County Cavan cannot access high speed broadband services, I would encourage them to contact my Department directly at *broadband@dccae.gov.ie*, quoting their address and Eircode, and giving details of providers they have contacted with a view to obtaining services. If investment from commercial operators is not forthcoming, the Department has reserved the right to include the premises in question as part of the procurement process.

The Department is now in a formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network within the State Intervention Area comprising over 750,000 premises including over 24,000 premises in County Cavan, covering 100,000km of road network and 96% of the land area of Ireland.

The procurement process commenced in December 2015. In July, 3 consortia were short-listed as bidders and invited to participate in formal dialogue. All three bidders involved in dialogue are proposing a predominantly fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) network solution to connect rural Ireland. This means that consumers in rural Ireland could have access to services of up to 1,000 megabits per second, with businesses availing of symmetrical upload and download speeds. It will involve the building of a new network in rural Ireland, spanning the equivalent of up to 100,000km of road.

Through this combination of commercial investment by telecoms operators, and the State Intervention, the National Broadband Plan aims to deal conclusively with Ireland's connectivity challenges.

### **Departmental Funding**

667. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to continue to provide funding for a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34979/16]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The Protecting Uplands & Rural Environments (PURE) Project was established on a pilot basis in January 2006 to combat the escalating problem of fly-tipping and small scale illegal dumping in the scenic area encompassed by the Wicklow and Dublin Uplands. PURE is a regional environmental partnership initiative which unites statutory and non-statutory interests in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands including the relevant local authorities, Coillte, the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), Fáilte Ireland and a number of non-statutory organisations represented by the Wicklow Uplands Council.

My Department originally agreed to provide funding of €350,000 over the three year lifespan of the pilot project (2006-2008) through the Environment Fund. The original three year period expired at the end of 2008 and, following a positive review of the effectiveness of the project, the Department agreed to extend the lifetime of the project for two further three year terms, 2009-2011, 2012-2014, and then for an additional two year period from 2015-2016. An allocation of funding in the amount of €90,000 per annum was provided over the most recent funding commitment, which runs until December 2016.

My Department recently received a proposal to extend the lifetime of the PURE project for a further term. The proposal is being examined in the context of my Department's consideration of Environment Fund allocations for 2017, and I expect to make a decision shortly.



### **Inland Fisheries Stocks**

668. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason licences for salmon and eel net fishing on the River Slaney are still in a state of suspension; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34999/16]

669. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if salmon and eel stocks on the River Slaney have not recovered in the ten years since licences were suspended; the current factors impacting any regeneration of eel and salmon stocks on the River Slaney; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35000/16]

670. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the methodology that is employed by scientific researchers to measure salmon and eel stocks on the River Slaney; the specific locations on the River Slaney that are fished by the scientific researchers in order to determine fish stocks; and if his Department will allow a delegation of one of these Slaney net fishermen and-or a member from this Deputy's office to accompany them during the next exercise to measure salmon and eel fish stocks on the River Slaney. [35001/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 668 to 670, inclusive, together.

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is the state agency responsible for the protection, management and conservation of Ireland's inland fisheries and sea angling resources. IFI manages salmon stocks on an individual river basis as each of Ireland's salmon rivers has its own genetically unique stock of salmon.

IFI is supported in its management role by a statutorily independent Standing Scientific Committee (SSC) for Salmon comprising scientists from IFI, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, the Loughs Agency, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Marine Institute, the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (Northern Ireland), and other State bodies and third level institutions.

The SSC estimates the number of salmon likely to return to each river in the next fishing season based on estimates of salmon runs over the most recent five years. Each river has an individual conservation limit which is essentially the number of salmon required to spawn to maintain a healthy population. If the estimate of returning salmon is above this limit then salmon from that individually genetic river population may be harvested commercially or by rod and line.

The harvest of salmon is restricted to those river stocks that are meeting their conservation limits. Fisheries are only considered in rivers where the estimated returns are above the conservation limit for the river. I am advised by IFI that a Risk Analysis is undertaken on any estimate of returns expected to be above the conservation limit.

In the case of the River Slaney, fish counter data is used to estimate the salmon run. IFI has confirmed that the estimate of returning salmon in 2015 was below the individual conservation limit for the river Slaney and, using fish counter data averaged over the past five years, no surplus of salmon was available for 2016. I am advised that the data from all counters is verified on an annual basis. I am happy to ask IFI to brief the Deputy on the methodologies used around counter technology, and to provide the latest verified counter figures.

The salmon assessment methodologies used in Ireland are considered best practice inter-

nationally, with many other countries moving towards the development of similar scientific assessment models for salmon stock conservation.

Ireland's Eel Management Plan (EMP) was reviewed in 2012 and again in 2015 in line with EU requirements. IFI carried out a comprehensive public consultation process as part of the both reviews. Based on management advice from IFI, and having considered all aspects of their report, the existing conservation measures in Ireland's EMP remain in place up to mid-2018. Conservation of Eel Fishing Bye-law No. C.S. 319, 2015 prohibits fishing for eel, or possessing or selling eel caught in a river in the State and ceases up to 30 June 2018.

The latest advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) for 2016 (published October 2015) is that "the status of eel remains critical and that all anthropogenic mortality (e.g. recreational and commercial fishing, hydropower, pumping stations, and pollution) affecting production and escapement of silver eels should be reduced to – or kept as close to – zero as possible." There is no change in the perception of the status of the stock as being critically endangered.

A new collaborative research initiative, involving IFI scientists and former eel fishermen to further develop national knowledge of the species and its medium to longer term potential for recovery, is underway. It is intended that the scientific fishery is to be undertaken for three years commencing in 2016 to increase data and knowledge ahead of further review of eel management measures in 2018.

While I recognise fully the difficulty facing eel fishermen, there is no property right attaching to public eel licences and currently there are no plans to introduce a hardship scheme as outlined by the Deputy, given that the closure of the fishery was applied for conservation reasons under the Fisheries Acts.

### **Traffic Data**

671. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a traffic survey of the N11 has been conducted; if so, the results of that survey; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34433/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply.

The Deputy should advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Rail Services**

672. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to downgrade the train service in County Wexford, notably the line from Gorey to Rosslare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34454/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As I indicated at the

Oireachtas Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport's meeting on 5 October, I have received a copy of the Rail Review conducted by the National Transport Authority and Irish Rail. It examines the funding parameters required to support our rail network now and in future. I have already stated that I would bring the report to Cabinet and then immediately arrange for its publication and the commencement of a public consultation process to be conducted by the National Transport Authority. I briefed my Cabinet colleagues this morning and I understand that the NTA intends to publish the Rail Review and launch the consultation process today.

While there has been much speculation regarding the future of individual rail lines, I want to stress that no decisions will be taken on any of the options identified in the Review in advance of the full process of public consultation. The public consultation will give the public and other interested parties the opportunity to see the analysis on rail funding and to contribute to all aspects of the debate on the future of rail.

### **Commercial Vehicle Testing**

673. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason it is necessary to charge €43 for commercial vehicle roadworthiness re-testing. [34480/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness (Vehicle Testing) (No. 2) Regulations 2013 (SI 347 of 2013) prescribe the charges applicable for the annual commercial vehicle roadworthiness (CVR) test and any re-test.

A charge for a re-test only applies in circumstances where it involves the use of testing equipment at the testing centre. There is no charge for a re-test involving a visual assessment where the use of test equipment is not necessary.

The CVR testing system is operated on a fully commercial basis and without any financial contribution from the State. Authorised by the Road Safety Authority, CVR tests are delivered by privately owned garages who are responsible for providing the necessary infrastructure and facilities to do so and who bear the financial and operational risks associated with such investment.

Apart from the introduction of the road safety levy as part of the fee for the annual CVR test, which incidentally does not apply to a re-test, there has been no change to the level of test fees since 2007. The model for commercial vehicle testing has been reviewed and it was decided by Government that the prevailing model involving the delivery of commercial testing by privately owned garages should continue.

### **Road Signage**

674. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if, in view of Brexit, he will request that Transport Infrastructure Ireland consider signage (details supplied) for Carrickmacross along the M1; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34528/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads

Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. The Deputy should advise my private office if she does not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Tourism Promotion**

675. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of hits the Wild Atlantic Way official travel site has received to date in 2016 to date, and since its launch; and the number of hits the Ireland's Ancient East website has received since it was launched. [34638/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick O'Donovan):** My Department's role in relation to tourism lies in the area of national tourism policy. It is not directly involved in the management or development of individual tourism projects, such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East, which are operational matters for the Board and Management of Fáilte Ireland.

I have accordingly referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply to the Deputy. The Deputy should contact my private office if he has not received a reply within ten working days.

### **Rail Services**

676. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason south Kildare is not being included as being on the commuter belt zone in the latest round of price changes for Irish Rail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34645/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply.

The Deputy should advise my private office if she does not receive a response within ten working days.

### **Irish Coast Guard Issues**

677. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the legislative Acts and legal instruments which provide for the establishment of the Irish Coast Guard and by which its powers, responsibilities, obligations and duties are statutorily mandated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34648/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Irish Marine Emergency Service (IMES) was established by Government Decision S. 21910 of 2 August 1990, as a Division of the Department of the Marine. The name was later changed to the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG), in 2000 and the division was subsequently transferred to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2006.

The IRCG have a number of functions, which include inter alia Search and Rescue (SAR) and Maritime Pollution Prevention and Response. SAR functions are provided for in Interna-

tional Conventions promulgated by both the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), Ireland is a contracting State to both organisations.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I am empowered, through National and EU Legislation, to appoint authorised officers to carry out certain functions. In relation to Maritime Pollution, there is a suite of legislation, The Sea Pollution Acts 1991-2006 under which I have appointed officers of the IRCG as authorised officers to enable them to carry out their duties.

Further powers are provided for in The Merchant Shipping (Salvage and Wreck) Act 1993 whereby officers are authorised for the purposes of saving shipwrecked persons, a vessel in distress or the cargo or apparel of the vessel.

Additionally, European Communities (Vessel Traffic Monitoring and Information System) Regulations 2010, give the IRCG powers to act in relation to Places of Refuge incidents and the monitoring of hazardous ships.

Finally, Annexe 12 (Standards & Recommended Practices Search & Rescue) (Designation Of Authorities) Order, 1995, designated the Minister for Transport, Energy and Communications as the authority responsible for execution of powers under Annex 12 to the Chicago Convention, other than in relation to Aviation Rescue Co-ordination Centres and Rescue Co-ordination Sub-Centres, which are the responsibility of the Irish Aviation Authority. This search and rescue function, where it relates to aviation accidents at sea, is carried out on my behalf by the IRCG.

### **Road Network**

678. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if primary routes are being closed for major road repairs for months due to the failure by contractors to get insurance to administer contra-flow systems for traffic to keep moving on routes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34654/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. The Deputy should advise my private office if she does not receive a reply within ten working days.

As regards regional and local roads, the improvement and maintenance of these roads is the statutory responsibility of the relevant local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993 and implementation of road works is, therefore, a matter for local authorities.

### **Heavy Goods Vehicle Levy**

679. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason haulage companies have to pay a tariff when entering Northern Ireland; the reason the reverse is not the case in the interests of equity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34666/16]



**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** There are no tariffs on cross-border traffic within the EU's customs union. I presume the Deputy is referring to the UK HGV road user levy. The Irish Government had serious concerns about the introduction of the HGV road user levy in the UK, including Northern Ireland, and extensively lobbied the UK authorities to exempt Northern Ireland from the charge because of the potential impact on cross-Border trade. However, the UK Minister for Transport chose to give only very minor exemptions from the levy to Northern Ireland. Subsequently, the Irish Government, supported by the Northern Ireland Department of the Environment, sought an exemption for the A5 from Derry to Monaghan, as it is a significant transit route from North West Donegal to Dublin. This request was also ultimately not accepted. While it is appreciated that the levy has imposed significant additional costs on Irish hauliers operating across the region, the application of the levy is a matter for the UK authorities.

Road charging systems for HGVs have been introduced in 10 EU Member States under Directive 1999/62/EC, as modified by Directives 2002/38/EC and 2011/76/EU. This Directive set out the legal basis for charging HGVs for the use of road infrastructure and authorises Member States, if they so wish, to levy user charges, which can be time-based, for example per day, week or year, or distance-based, calculated on the basis of number of kilometres driven.

The introduction of a road user charge for HGVs in Ireland is under consideration in my Department.

### **Road Projects Status**

680. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when funding will be allocated to the N2 Corracrin-to-Emyvale road project in order to allow the planning stage to progress; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34696/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. The Deputy should advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Traffic Management**

681. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on it. [34717/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** In reference to the details supplied, it must be noted that drivers are required to ensure that the speed at which they drive is appropriate for the prevailing conditions. In an effort to address inappropriate driving speeds on rural roads a new rural speed limit sign was introduced in March 2015 to emphasise this point. This new sign means that drivers must use their judgement according to the conditions prevailing, but never exceed the 80km/h maximum limit on roads to which this sign applies.

It is important to remember that elected members of local authorities have statutory respon-



sibility for setting appropriate Special Speed Limit bye-laws for any particular road within their remit. Supported by expert advice from local authority road engineers, elected councillors are best placed to decide on the most appropriate speed limits and any associated traffic calming measures that should apply according to varying local conditions. My Department's *Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits* reiterates these responsibilities and provides guidance in relation to such.

In addition, local authorities have also been requested to review and update all speed limits in their administrative areas in accordance with these *Guidelines* and this process is currently on-going. In the case of national roads, local authorities were requested to undertake this review in conjunction with TII.

### **Public Transport Fares**

682. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if recent increases in fares for commuters in Maynooth and Leixlip can be revised with particular reference to the large numbers of commuters from these towns who are expected to travel to larger centres for employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34761/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I refer the Deputy to the Topical Issue on "Maynooth line fare increases for commuters between Leixlip and Dublin" which I answered on 10 November 2016.

I think it important to note that the powers afforded to the National Transport Authority (NTA) with respect to the fares determination process are statutory ones and as Minister I do not have any function in this regard. This year's fares determinations mean that approximately 75% of passengers will see no increase in their fares next year.

Since it assumed its powers in this area, the NTA has sought to simplify what was an extremely complicated and cumbersome fares system and introduce a more logical and fair distance based model.

In relation to rail, an examination of approximately 1,200 Origin and Destination station pairs concluded that fares between some pairs were set particularly low for various historic, commercial and operational reasons and were not in line with the fares other passengers are paying for a similar distance journey. The NTA has been adjusting fares across the rail network in recent years in order to remove these anomalies.

This year the final 261 station pairs were examined with the vast majority seeing a decrease in their fares for next year as a result.

However, inevitably a small number, 36 station pairs to be exact or around 3% of the total number of possible pairs, will see a fare increase. This is as a result of the previously unfair level of fares when compared with other station pairs across the broader network.

In terms of Leixlip, the trip to Dublin Pearse has been moved from zone 3 to zone 4. A single adult Leap fare will now cost €2.93 as opposed to €2.46. There is no change to the cost of a single fare between Maynooth and the City Centre.

Obviously I can understand that passengers at Leixlip will be disappointed at such a change; however, the overall impact of these changes is that all passengers within the Short Hop Zone are now paying the same fare for the same distance from 1 December next and that is in line with the overall strategy being pursued by the NTA.

## Trade Fairs

683. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to attract the Web Summit to return here in view of the hugely successful web summit in Portugal recently and considering that this event was originally held in Dublin; if he has held any discussions with the promoters in terms of the supports that can be provided to facilitate such a return; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34937/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Patrick O'Donovan):** It is disappointing that the Web Summit made the decision in 2015 to move to Lisbon for the following three years, particularly as it had been such a great success in Dublin and grown so impressively over the previous five years. However, the organisers were very clear about their intention to leave and that was a commercial matter for the organisers to consider and decide.

That said, I am very open to engaging with the organisers of the Web Summit with regard to them returning to Dublin.

It should be noted that Fáilte Ireland continues to work with the international conferencing sector to win events and many other events are continuing to choose Dublin and Ireland as their host destination.

Business tourism was worth approximately €670 million to the Irish economy in 2015 and every indication is that 2016 will mark a further increase in business tourism activity in Ireland. It accounts for 20,000 jobs in Ireland and is one of our highest yielding sectors in tourism.

## Bus Éireann Services

684. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason there is a designated Bus Éireann bus shelter located at a location (details supplied) but no stop or pick up point; and if it will be made a designated pick-up and drop-off point. [34969/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development of public transport infrastructure including bus stops, bus shelters, bus stations, bus stands and bus fleets in the State.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

## Departmental Agencies Staff Recruitment

685. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason Fáilte Ireland has refused to advertise and fill the head-of-marketing job internally; the reason this is now being contracted to a private company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35143/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to the Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. The Deputy should contact my private office if a reply is not

received within ten working days.

### **Tourism Promotion**

686. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of proposals to boost tourism on Dursey Island (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35146/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** My Department's role in relation to tourism primarily lies in the area of national tourism policy. It is not involved in the management or development of individual projects, which are operational matters for the Board and Management of Fáilte Ireland. Accordingly I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **National Transport Authority Data**

687. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the projected population in County Meath, according to the National Transport Authority, for 2016, 2021 and 2026. [35212/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

### **Traffic Data**

688. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the average daily number of cars using the M3 in 2015 and 2016. [35213/16]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. The Deputy should advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **National Standards Authority of Ireland**

689. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the body that is responsible for the regulation of dispensing oil products on forecourts to ensure standards and quantities dispensed are as they should be; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34427/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** The body responsible for the regulation of dispensing all products on forecourts is the National

Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI). Legal Metrology is responsible for the implementation of the Metrology Acts 1980-1996 and related Regulations. It does this through certifying and inspecting measurement instruments and the quantities of pre-packaged products. A wide range of measuring instruments, including liquid fuel dispensers on service station forecourts are subject to legal metrological control when used for trade purposes.

The Metrology Act 1996 and Legal Metrology (General) Regulations 2008, provide that only nationally approved instruments or instruments that have undergone European conformity assessment and bear the CE mark can be used for trade. The primary responsibility for design approval and conformity assessment rests with the manufacturer. The trader is obliged to ensure that only such a measuring instrument is used for trade and that it is correct and verified at all times. Re-verification must be carried out after the instrument has been repaired, re-calibrated or failed inspection. The process of re-verification involves establishing that the instrument complies with regulations, in particular, testing for accuracy against applicable measurement tolerances and the application of tamper evident seals.

In order to ensure sufficient resources are available for traders to keep their instruments in compliance, Legal Metrology has authorised private operators, subject to specific conditions, under Section 12 of the 1996 Act, to undertake verifications at the request of the instrument owner. To monitor compliance, NSAI Legal Metrology Inspectors, operating out of seven offices countrywide, carry out inspections of liquid fuel dispensers on the basis of risk-based enforcement.

Legal Metrology Inspectors have inspected 7420 liquid fuel dispensers to date in 2016. Compliance levels are satisfactory.

Approximately 60% of liquid Fuel dispensers were metrologically tested to determine if they were dispensing within legal tolerances while approximately 40% were visually inspected to ensure that they were verified and sealed.

NSAI Legal Metrology continues to review its enforcement strategy on the basis of inspection information allocating resources as necessary to the areas of highest risk.

### **Joint Labour Committees Agreements**

**690. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the hourly rate for contract cleaners; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34412/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** Deputy, you will be aware that I signed the Employment Regulation (Amendment) Order (Contract Cleaning Joint Labour Committee) 2016 on 27 October 27 last. (<https://www.djei.ie/en/Legislation/SI-No-548-of-2016.html>).

The making of the Order follows a public consultation on draft proposals that were developed by the Contract Cleaning Joint Labour Committee for an amended Employment Regulation Order for the Sector. This process was undertaken in August of this year when notice of making of the proposals was advertised in national newspapers on 18 August. That notice invited observations on the proposals to be submitted by 16 September. Copies of the draft proposals were available from the Joint Labour Committees Secretariat and were also uploaded on the Workplace Relations website. [https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/news-media/Workplace\\_Relations\\_Notices/Contract\\_Cleaning\\_JLC\\_Draft\\_ERO.html](https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/news-media/Workplace_Relations_Notices/Contract_Cleaning_JLC_Draft_ERO.html)

The Joint Labour Committee (JLC) for the Sector, made up of representatives of the main unions and employers in the sector, considered submissions made and submitted their final proposals for pay and other terms to apply to workers in the Sector, to the Labour Court for consideration. Amongst other things, the JLC must have regard to the legitimate financial and commercial interests of the employers in the sector in question. In this instance the Labour Court adopted the proposals and sent them to me. Being satisfied that the provisions of the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2012 were complied with, I signed the Order to effect the proposals.

If enterprises that are covered by Employment Regulation Orders are experiencing severe financial difficulties they may apply to the Labour Court for an exemption from their obligation to pay the rates provided for in the Orders for a specified period of time. The criteria relating to these exemptions are provided for in the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2012. (<https://www.djei.ie/en/Legislation/Legislation-Files/Act32of2012.pdf>).

The membership of the Contract Cleaning Joint Labour Committee is set out as follows:-

**Contract Cleaning Industry Joint Labour Committee**

|   |              |                            |              |
|---|--------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Chairman                                      |              | Brendan Cunningham         |              |
| Vice Chairman                                 |              | Michael Keegan             |              |
| Employer Representatives (7)                  |              | Worker Representatives (7) |              |
| Name  | Nominated by | Name                       | Nominated by |
| Jackie O' Brien (ICCA)OCS                     | IBEC         | Diane Jackson (SIPTU)      | ICTU         |
| Mary Horgan (ICCA)Grosvenor Cleaning Services | IBEC         | Jerry Browne (SIP-TU)      | ICTU         |
| Colin Maybin (ICCA)Momentum Support           | IBEC         | Paul Hansard (SIP-TU)      | ICTU         |
| Shane Doherty (ICCA)ISS Ireland Limited       | IBEC         | Christine Quinn (SIPTU)    | ICTU         |
| Avril McCarthy (ICCA)Derry Court Co. Ltd      | IBEC         | Teresa Thompson (SIPTU)    | ICTU         |
| Jan Hayden (ICCA) Mitie Facilities Management | IBEC         | Tony Kelly (UNITE)         | ICTU         |
| Tiernan Doherty (IBEC)                        | IBEC         | Robby Purfield (SIPTU)     | ICTU         |
| Alana Dunican (ICCA)Momentum Support          | IBEC         | Orlagh Fawl (SIP-TU)       | ICTU         |
| Maeve Coffey (ICCA)Noonan                     | Noonan       | Valerie Chambers           | ICTU         |

**Local Enterprise Offices**

691. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if

there are any sources of funding in her Department or in any agencies under her Department's remit for a company expanding a commercial marina development with associated economic, community and social benefits. [34434/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** My Department or enterprise agencies do not provide supports for this type of development. However, the promoter could engage with the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) who may be able to offer advice on any other form of support from various sources. At the appropriate time, the relevant Local Enterprise Office could also examine whatever spin-out projects that might emerge to consider if they would fall within the range of activity eligible for LEO support.

There is a possibility that Fáilte Ireland or the Local Authority in the area could be sources of funding support. In addition, if the marina is a Gaeltacht location the promoters could also check with Údarás na Gaeltachta if any form of support could be considered.

### **Community Enterprise Centres**

692. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the persons who sat on the evaluation panel that assessed applications for the community enterprise initiative; the persons who chose the panel; the date the appointments were made; the persons who made the initial decision to expand the scheme beyond community enterprise centres; if applications were accepted from organisations that did not meet the applying criteria on the closing date of 10 July 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34450/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** Announced in February 2015 as part of the Government's Regional Action Plan for Jobs, the Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme is part of the Government's €250 million regional strategy aimed at accelerating jobs recovery in every part of the country.

In line with the Government's regional strategy, the primary objective of the Community Enterprise Initiative is to support public, private and community organisations to create new collaborative projects to stimulate and support enterprise and job creation at local, community and regional level. The competitive call for applications was open to new and existing organisations, groups and alliances, who could collaboratively seek to promote entrepreneurship, create jobs, foster innovation and enhance export opportunities for small business.

The Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme was administered by Enterprise Ireland. The details of the scheme – eligibility, objectives and evaluation criteria - were stated in the Scheme's Reference Document published on Enterprise Ireland's website.

Enterprise Ireland appointed the members of the evaluation panel for this Scheme based on required expertise. The evaluation panel was comprised of one Enterprise Ireland representative, one representative from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, three representatives from the private sector and an independent evaluator / facilitator. Under data protection, Enterprise Ireland is not in a position to release the names of the persons on the evaluation panel.

The Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme closed on 4 September 2015, after an extension to the closing date (original closing date 10 July 2016). In line with the Scheme Reference Document, applications were accepted from applicants who met pre-stated eligibility criteria.



693. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 188 of 27 October 2016, the number of the work permits refused on appeal that were subsequently granted by her; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34593/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen) (Deputy Pat Breen):** I refer to my response to Question No. 188 of 27 October 2016 which provided figures as requested by the Deputy for the years 2014, 2015 and to end September 2016. The tables therein set out the number of employment permit applications received, the number of appeals to refusals received and the number of permits granted on foot of those appeals.

Where an employment permit application is refused, it is open to an applicant to submit a request for a review to be conducted. Under the provisions of the Employment Permits Act, 2006 as amended, this review decision is final and cannot be revisited. Thereafter, it is open to an applicant to submit a new employment permit application and if the conditions that gave rise to the refusal change, it may lead to an employment permit being granted in relation to the new application.

### Trade Data

694. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she will provide a statistical breakdown of economic activity from imports from Britain and Northern Ireland on an annual basis from 2014 to 2016 to date, inclusive. [34603/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** Enterprise 2025, the Government's long-term enterprise policy is an ambitious strategy, with the objective of delivering growth over the next decade that is sustainable. The objective is to achieve full employment over the period to 2020, underpinned by innovation, productivity, cost effectiveness and competitiveness. The competitiveness of our imports as inputs to the productive sector of the economy is an important consideration in terms of overall enterprise performance.

According to the latest CSO Trade Statistics, total merchandise imports reached €70 billion in 2015, of which 24% were from Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as set out in Table 1.

These imports are inputs to production processes throughout the economy in addition to consumer markets as set out in Table 2.

Imports of services totalled over €109 billion in 2014, the latest year for which a detailed breakdown is available, of which €11.3 billion were from Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as set out in Table 3.

My Department will continue to monitor developments in import patterns over the coming months as data becomes available on the competitiveness impacts for enterprises and consumers.

**Table 1. Imports from Great Britain, 2014, 2015 and 2016, €m**

| -                                | 2014  | 2015  | January to July 2016 |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------|----------------------|
| Total imports from Great Britain | 16461 | 16897 | 8663                 |

| -                                     | 2014   | 2015   | January to July 2016 |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|----------------------|
| Total imports from Northern Ireland   | 1104   | 1091   | 588                  |
| Total imports                         | 62,157 | 70,007 | 38,177               |
| GB and Northern Ireland as % of Total | 28%    | 26%    | 24%                  |

CSO Trade Statistics July 2016 Release

**Table 2. Value of Merchandise Imports by main Use**

| -  | All Countries | Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Other EU Member States | GB and NI as % of total |
|--|---------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Producer Capital Goods (Euro Thousand)                                       | 17,657,700    | 1,462,700                          | 9,492,500              | 8%                      |
| Consumption Goods (Euro Thousand)  | 19,815,100    | ..                                 | ..                     |                         |
| Consumption Goods (Food, Drink and Tobacco) (Euro Thousand)                  | 5,746,700     | 2,931,500                          | 2,186,500              | 51%                     |
| Other Consumption Goods (Other Than Food, Drink and Tobacco) (Euro Thousand) | 14,068,400    | 4,601,800                          | 3,598,300              | 33%                     |
| Materials for Production (Euro Thousand)                                     | 31,068,100    | ..                                 | ..                     |                         |
| Materials for Agriculture Production (Euro Thousand)                         | 2,068,400     | 569,700                            | 698,800                | 28%                     |
| Materials for Production (Other Than Agriculture) (Euro Thousand)            | 28,999,700    | 7,505,200                          | 7,896,500              | 26%                     |
| Not Classified (Euro Thousand)   | 1,570,100     | ..                                 | ..                     |                         |

CSO Statbank external trade statistics (10 November 2016)

**Table 3. Imports of Services, 2014**

| -   | All countries and international organisations | United Kingdom | UK as % of total |
|---|---|----------------|------------------|
| Services total  | 109,376                                       | 11,361         | 10.4%            |
| Transport   | 1,842   | 567            | 30.8%            |
| Tourism and travel  | 4,561   | 840            | 18.4%            |
| Communications  | 979   | ..             |                  |
| Insurance   | 5,970   | 1,347          | 22.6%            |
| Financial services  | 6,662   | ..             |                  |
| Computer services   | 647   | 102            | 15.8%            |
| Royalties/licences  | 48,482  | 770            | 1.6%             |
| All business services   | 38,816  | 5,336          | 13.7%            |
| Business services: Merchenting  | ..  | ..             |                  |
| Business services: Other Trade related services                           | ..  | ..             |                  |
| Business services: Operational leasing                                    | 1,269   | 30             | 2.4%             |
| Business services: Legal, Accounting and other professional services      | 1,074   | 140            | 13.0%            |
| Business services: Advertising and market research                        | 4,541   | 701            | 15.4%            |
| Business services: Research and development                               | 6,615   | 362            | 5.5%             |
| Business services: Architectural engineering and other technical services | 110   | 45             | 40.9%            |
| Business services: Management services between affiliates                 | ..  | ..             |                  |
| Business services: Other  | 11,712  | 2,727          | 23.3%            |
| Business services: Trade related services                                 | 13,496  | 1,330          | 9.9%             |
| Other services not elsewhere stated                                       | 266   | 64             | 24.1%            |
| Repairs and processing  | 1,153   | 23             | 2.0%             |

## Exports Data

695. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she will provide a statistical breakdown of economic activity from exports to Britain and Northern Ireland on an annual basis from 2014 to 2016 to date. [34604/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** Enterprise 2025, the Government's long-term enterprise policy is an ambitious strategy, with the objective of delivering growth over the next decade that is sustainable. The objective is to achieve strong export performance that is underpinned by innovation, productivity, cost effectiveness and competitiveness.

According to the latest CSO Trade Statistics, Merchandise exports overall grew by 21 percent to €112,209m from 2014 to 2015. Combined exports to Great Britain and Northern Ireland grew by 13 percent to €15,530m in the same year, indicating significantly higher growth in export markets beyond the UK. Overall, exports to Great Britain and Northern Ireland are falling as a proportion of total exports in the available data from 14.8 percent in 2014 to 12.6 percent in January to July 2016.

Looking at the data by sector of origin shows that from January to July 2016, 47 percent of agricultural exports and 31 percent of total Forestry and Fishing Produce went to Great Britain and Northern Ireland, indicating significant reliance on the UK market in these sectors. Alternatively, just 10 percent of total industrial produce was exported to Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Industrial produce accounts for the vast majority (€61,468 billion, 93 percent) of total merchandise exports.

The latest Services Export data by country is only available to 2014. Quarterly Balance of Payments data to Q2 2016 is only released at the following geographic levels - all countries; EMU and non EMU countries. The 2014 data which is available shows that total services exports to the UK accounted for €20,176 million or 20 percent of total services exports. Sectors with relatively high dependency (higher than 30 percent) on the UK market are Transport (80 percent), Financial Services (33 percent) and Other Business services (32 percent).

Data from the Enterprise Agency Clients shows the following economic activity relating to exports to the UK. The data shows that:

- Irish companies supported by the agencies exported €6,489 million in exports to the UK in 2014, accounting for 41 percent of total exports of Irish owned firms.

- Sectors with a relatively high proportion of total exports to the UK include Agriculture (72 percent), Food Drink and Tobacco (45 percent), Textiles (57 percent), Wood and Wood Products (80 percent), paper and Printing (71 percent), Rubber and Plastics (62 percent), Non Metallic Minerals (80 percent), Metal Products (75 percent), Electrical Equipment (48 percent), Transport (51 percent), Energy (72 percent), Recycling and Waste (61 percent), Construction (over 47 percent) and Publishing and Broadcasting (43 percent).

- Foreign-owned companies supported by the agencies exported €13,127m in exports to the UK, accounting for 18 percent of total exports by foreign-owned firms.

**Table 1 Total Merchandise Exports by Country (€m)**

| -                              | 2014   | 2015   | Jan-July 2016 |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|---------------|
| Total exports to Great Britain | 12,137 | 13,786 | 7,338         |

| -                                     | 2014   | 2015    | Jan-July 2016 |
|---------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------------|
| Tota exports to Northern Ireland      | 1,605  | 1,744   | 931           |
| Total merchandise exports             | 92,616 | 112,209 | 65,864        |
| GB and Northern Ireland as % of Total | 14.8%  | 13.8%   | 12.6%         |

Source: CSO Trade Statistics July 2016 (published October 2016)

**Table 2 Merchandise Exports by Broad Sector and Destination (€000's)**

| -                                  | Agricultural Produce (Euro Thousand) | Forestry and Fishing Produce (Euro Thousand) | Industrial Produce (Euro Thousand) | Not Classified (Euro Thousand)     |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Great Britain and Northern Ireland | 3,270,400                            | 212,100                                      | 20149,749,200                      | ..                                 |
| Other EU Member States             | 2,332,000                            | 294,500                                      | 34,351,600                         | ..                                 |
| All Countries                      | 6,644,900                            | 687,900                                      | 84,541,500                         | 741,400                            |
| GB and NI as % of total            | 49%                                  | 31%  | 12%                                |                                    |
| 2015                               | Agricultural Produce (Euro Thousand) | Forestry and Fishing Produce (Euro Thousand) | Industrial Produce (Euro Thousand) | Not Classified (Euro Thousand)     |
| Great Britain and Northern Ireland | 3,529,000                            | 212,400                                      | 11,271,400                         | ..                                 |
| Other EU Member States             | 2,283,500                            | 324,300                                      | 41,473,100                         |                                    |
| All Countries                      | 6,899,800                            | 724,600                                      | 104,017,600                        | 765,400                            |
| GB and NI as % of total            | 51%                                  | 29%  | 11%                                |                                    |
| January to July 2016               | Agricultural Produce (Euro Thousand) | Forestry and Fishing Produce (Euro Thousand) |                                    | Industrial Produce (Euro Thousand) |
| Great Britain and Northern Ireland | 1,751,200                            | 128,700                                      | 6,087,800                          |                                    |
| Other EU Member States             | 1,281,700                            | 191,100                                      | 24,062,100                         |                                    |
| All Countries                      | 3,703,200                            | 413,800                                      | 61,467,700                         | 507,700                            |
| GB and NI as % of total            | 47%                                  | 31%  | 10%                                |                                    |

Source: CSO external trade statistics (statbank reference 10 November 2016)

**Table 3 – Services Exports by Sector and Country (€m)**

|  | All countries and international organisations | United Kingdom | UK as % of total |
|--|---|----------------|------------------|
| Services total   | 101750  | 20176          | 20%              |
| Transport  | 5193  | 4138           | 80%              |
| Tourism and travel   | 3656  | 918            | 25%              |
| Communications   | 567   | ..             |                  |
| Insurance  | 9254  | 2143           | 23%              |
| Financial services   | 8335  | 2736           | 33%              |
| Computer services  | 47915   | 6130           | 13%              |
| Royalties/licences   | 4776  | 311            | 7%               |
| All business services  | 19095   | 3175           | 17%              |
| Business services:<br>Merchandising  | ..  | ..             |                  |
| Business services:<br>Other Trade related services                           | ..  | ..             |                  |
| Business services:<br>Operational leasing                                    | 7843  | 545            | 7%               |
| Business services:<br>Legal, Accounting and other professional services      | 405   | 98             | 24%              |
| Business services:<br>Advertising and market research                        | 94  | ..             |                  |
| Business services:<br>Research and development                               | 1749  | ..             |                  |
| Business services:<br>Architectural engineering and other technical services | 212   | 29             | 14%              |
| Business services:<br>Management services between affiliates                 | ..  | ..             |                  |
| Business services:<br>Other  | 6331  | 2003           | 32%              |
| Business services:<br>Trade related services                                 | 2464  | 443            | 18%              |
| Other services not elsewhere stated  | 1710  | 474            | 28%              |
| Repairs and processing   | 1251  | ..             |                  |

Source: CSO Balance of Payments Annual Data statistics (statbank reference 10 November 2016)



**Table 4 Exports of Enterprise Agency Clients to UK Markets, 2014**

| -   | IRISH-OWNED |             | Foreign Owned |             | Total |
|---|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------|
|   | 2014        | % total '14 | 2014          | % total '14 | 2014  |
|   | € m         | %           | € m           | %           | € m   |
| Manufacturing & Other Industry (including Primary Production) |             |             |               |             |       |
| Agriculture, Fishing, Forestry, Mining & Quarrying            | 144         | 72%         | -             | 0%          | 144   |
| Food, Drink & Tobacco   | 2,792       | 45%         | 952           | 14%         | 3,744 |
| Textiles, Clothing, Footwear & Leather                        | 156         | 57%         | 0             | 1%          | 156   |
| Wood & Wood Products  | 180         | 80%         | 164           | 66%         | 344   |
| Paper & Printing  | 84          | 71%         | 7             | 36%         | 92    |
| Chemicals   | 96          | 25%         | 2,186         | 7%          | 2,283 |
| Rubber & Plastics   | 265         | 62%         | 114           | 13%         | 379   |
| Non-Metallic Minerals   | 294         | 80%         | 12            | 5%          | 306   |
| Basic & Fabricated Metal Products                             | 364         | 75%         | 88            | 12%         | 452   |
| Computer, Electronic & Optical Products                       | 62          | 15%         | 701           | 8%          | 763   |
| Electrical equipment  | 210         | 48%         | 41            | 10%         | 252   |
| Machinery & Equipment   | 226         | 32%         | 116           | 9%          | 342   |
| Transport Equipment   | 57          | 51%         | 85            | 12%         | 142   |
| Medical Device Manufacturing                                  | 15          | 15%         | 305           | 4%          | 319   |

| -   | IRISH-OWNED |     | Foreign Owned |     | Total  |
|---|-------------|-----|---------------|-----|--------|
| Other Misc. Manufacturing                     | 78          | 37% | 50            | 20% | 128    |
| Sub Total                                     | 5,021       | 47% | 4,823         | 8%  | 9,845  |
| Energy, Water, Waste & Construction           |             |     |               |     |        |
| Energy  | 11          | 72% |               |     | 11     |
| Recycling & Waste                             | 26          | 61% |               |     | 26     |
| Construction (Excl. EI Amendments)            | 113         | 73% |               |     | 113    |
| Construction (EI Amendments)                  | 157         | 47% |               |     | 157    |
| Sub Total                                     | 307         | 56% |               |     | 307    |
| Information, Communications & Other Services  |             | 0%  |               |     |        |
| Publishing, Broadcasting & Telecommunications | 79          | 43% | 14            | 26% | 93     |
| Computer Programming                          | 10          | 34% | 6,062         | 15% | 6,072  |
| Computer Consultancy                          | 258         | 27% | 4,827         | 26% | 5,085  |
| Computer Facilities Management                |             | 14% | 1,334         | 27% | 1,334  |
| Other IT & Computer Services                  | 86          | 32% | 626           | 9%  | 712    |
| Financial Services                            | 82          | 13% | 229           | 21% | 310    |
| Business Services                             | 518         | 28% | 11            | 11% | 530    |
| Education                                     | 25          | 6%  |               |     | 25     |
| Other Services                                | 101         | 42% | 24            | 6%  | 125    |
| Sub Total                                     | 1,160       | 26% | 13,127        | 18% | 14,287 |
| Grand Total - All Sectors                     | 6,489       | 41% | 17,950        | 13% | 24,438 |

| -                    | IRISH-OWNED |     | Foreign Owned |     | Total  |
|----------------------|-------------|-----|---------------|-----|--------|
| Dublin               | 1,281       | 29% | 12,548        | 17% | 13,829 |
| Rest of South & East | 2,777       | 41% | 4,298         | 9%  | 7,075  |
| BMW Area             | 2,430       | 52% | 1,105         | 10% | 3,534  |

**Source: DJEI Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact 2014**

### Brexit Issues

696. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if an assessment has been carried out on the way import duty would impact on the trading of goods with Britain and Northern Ireland post-Brexit; and if import duty will be set at 23%. [34605/16]

699. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she will provide a statistical breakdown on an annual basis of cross-Border trade and tourism in County Donegal since 2014; and if her Department has conducted research into the likely implications arising from Brexit on trade and tourism throughout the Border region. [34608/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 696 and 699 together.

Promoting cross-border trade in light of the potential impacts of Brexit is a key priority for the Government as a whole.

It is, of course, hard to predict at this stage what the impact of Brexit will be for all of Ireland, including border counties such as Donegal. Much will depend on the nature of the deal that will be negotiated between the UK and the EU. This Government will seek, during that process, to highlight our unique economic ties with Northern Ireland.

It is clear that the cross-border market on the island is a particularly important one for SMEs, with nearly two thirds of Northern Ireland small firm exports going South and one sixth of Ireland's small firm exports going North.

InterTrade Ireland is initiating a research project to examine the impact of differing trade regimes which may emerge in the post-Brexit environment. This study will include an analysis of tariff rates to look at the range of possible impacts for products currently traded between both jurisdictions.

I am engaged strongly with Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland to ensure that Irish jobs are maintained and created. I am in ongoing communication with these agencies, and chair a Brexit Coordination Group which includes the senior management of my Department and the CEOs of the agencies.

IDA Ireland will continue to work to implement its business development strategy for the North West, which includes Donegal, to help it maximise investment in the Region. Among its targets, this strategy will see the Agency seeking to secure potential "second site" investments from companies with existing operations in Dublin, as well as pursuing new investments for the region.

Enterprise Ireland is working with its 1,500 clients who export to the UK, looking at the in-

dividual challenges faced by companies in every county in Ireland and also on a sectoral level, as some sectors are more exposed than others.

From a strategic perspective Enterprise Ireland has a two pronged approach. It is working to assist companies to maintain and grow UK exports and extend their international reach. It is also supporting companies in enhancing their competitiveness to protect and grow Irish exports and jobs. In this regard, EI is assisting clients to improve their processes to drive efficiencies and cost reductions and undertake R&D and innovation with a view to improving existing products and processes or developing new ones.

### **Brexit Issues**

697. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if an assessment has been carried out into the future competitiveness of the SME retail sector post-Brexit, particularly the implications for imports and exports to and from Britain and Northern Ireland. [34606/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** In terms of assessing the impacts of Brexit on businesses, I have tasked my Department officials with making Brexit their number one priority. I am establishing a new focused Brexit Unit within the Department, and a Brexit Senior Officials Group to monitor developments across the Department on a regular basis at official level.

As chair of the Retail Consultation Forum, I am also very aware of the specific issues faced by the retail sector. The Forum provides a platform for my Department to engage directly with the concerns of retailers, and its work programme is focused on identifying opportunities and responses to challenges in a collaborative manner to maintain the competitiveness of the sector and support sustainable jobs growth in the retail sector across all regions.

Currently, the Forum's work programme has four key areas of focus: reducing energy costs, maximising opportunities in the digital economy, identifying skills needs for the sector, and the revitalisation of town centres. These working groups are focused on maximising the benefit of concrete initiatives and funding streams, such as the fund of €10 million made available by the Government this year for the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, and further funding of €12 million in 2017. Effective use of funds such as this will be of particular support to small and medium retailers. Progressing the work areas of the Forum will provide support to the retail sector in facing Brexit-related challenges.

I will be chairing the next meeting of the Retail Consultation Forum on 21st November. Brexit is now a standing item on the agenda and members of the Forum will be briefed at this meeting by senior officials from the Department of the Taoiseach on the whole of Government response to the Brexit-related challenges. This will also provide retail members of the Forum with an opportunity to outline their concerns regarding the impact of Brexit on the sector.

At this stage, it is difficult to predict what the precise impact of Brexit will be on specific business sectors, and much will depend on the nature of the deal negotiated between the UK and the EU. This Government will ensure, during that process, to highlight our unique economic ties with both Britain and Northern Ireland.

As Minister, I have responsibility for supporting SMEs across the whole of the economy. I am making sure that I am armed with the detail of how Brexit impacts on each sector and each company type – be they SMEs, micro enterprises, or larger companies, before I finalise any proposals about specific measures. My Department is scoping out possible responses to the

short term currency challenge and I expect to be in a position to announce more detail, based on actual company needs shortly.

### **Brexit Issues**

698. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if an assessment has been carried out to examine the implications for the cost of living for communities in rural and Border areas as a result of Brexit on the import and export of consumer goods; and the future implications for job creation in the region. [34607/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** As Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, my focus is on improving Ireland's competitiveness performance. Ensuring Ireland is a competitive location to establish and run a business is essential for job creation. Ireland's competitiveness also impacts on the comparative cost of living between Ireland and other regions with which we compete, including between North and South of the Border on the island. Brexit means we must do more across a wide range of policy areas to enhance our attractiveness as a location to start and locate a business relative to the UK. The most recent data from the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business shows that Ireland is ahead of the UK in terms of ease of starting a business and paying tax but is behind the UK in the overall rankings.

Enterprise 2025, the Government's long-term enterprise policy is an ambitious strategy, with the objective of delivering growth over the next decade that is sustainable. The Regional Action Plans for Jobs are the key instrument by which we are seeking to deliver on the objectives of Enterprise 2025 at regional level. Implementation Groups have been established in the North East and North West Regions for their respective Action Plans and my officials have received the first reports on progress on the Action Plans and will consider with the stakeholders the next steps required.

I have also asked the Chairman of the National Competitiveness Council to review the competitiveness of Ireland versus the UK. I expect the work of the Council to be completed early in the new year.

In addition, InterTrade Ireland is actively developing a programme of information sessions and resources to support businesses through the challenging period of exchange rate volatility and I will be participating in their programme of engagements over the coming months to assess for myself the competitiveness issues for businesses and communities in the Border areas.

*Question No. 699 answered with Question No. 696.*

### **IDA Site Visits**

700. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of potential US inward investors that have conducted site visits in each IDA region in 2016, both before and after the Brexit referendum result in the UK. [34637/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** The number of site visits for the first two quarters of 2016 is set out in the following table. The number of site visits to the end of the third quarter, which incorporates the period directly after the result of the EU-UK referendum, is also set out for comparison.

IDA Ireland operates in an environment of ever increasing worldwide competition for for-

eign direct investment. For competitiveness reasons, it is not possible for IDA Ireland to disclose details of the country of origin of prospective investors into Ireland.

#### IDA Site Visits by County to end of 2016

| County    | Site Visits to end Q2 16 | Site Visits to end Q3 2016 |
|-----------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Carlow    | 2                        | 8                          |
| Cavan     | 1                        | 1                          |
| Clare     | 7                        | 13                         |
| Cork      | 29                       | 43                         |
| Donegal   | 5                        | 6                          |
| Dublin    | 145                      | 204                        |
| Galway    | 23                       | 33                         |
| Kerry     | 2                        | 3                          |
| Kildare   | 6                        | 7                          |
| Kilkenny  | 8                        | 10                         |
| Laois     | 2                        | 6                          |
| Leitrim   | 2                        | 6                          |
| Limerick  | 23                       | 39                         |
| Longford  | 3                        | 5                          |
| Louth     | 10                       | 17                         |
| Mayo      | 2                        | 4                          |
| Meath     | 4                        | 7                          |
| Monaghan  | 1                        | 2                          |
| Offaly    | 2                        | 4                          |
| Roscommon | 1                        | 1                          |
| Sligo     | 7                        | 13                         |
| Tipperary | 6                        | 8                          |
| Waterford | 6                        | 15                         |
| Westmeath | 14                       | 24                         |
| Wexford   | 3                        | 6                          |
| Wicklow   | 1                        | 4                          |
| Total:    | 315                      | 489                        |

#### Job Losses

701. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the actions her Department in conjunction with IDA and Enterprise Ireland have taken to replace the jobs in the midlands since the closure of a factory (details supplied) and the announcement from a company (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34939/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland (EI) and Westmeath Local Enterprise Office continue to work hard to mitigate the impact of the job losses in Westmeath caused by the closure of the company concerned. Good progress was made in this respect in 2015, with a total of 750 new jobs being created in the county.

IDA Ireland, for its part, is engaging with both current and prospective clients about investing further in Westmeath and the wider region. A good example of positive investment into



the county was the announcement last year by Patterson Pumps of a 30-person expansion at its manufacturing facility there. I am hopeful that more investment will be secured in the time ahead.

In terms of enterprise development in the Midlands, and in Mullingar in particular, EI supports entrepreneurs who are setting up start-up companies in manufacturing and internationally traded services. EI also aims to create new jobs by working with its existing established companies in the Midlands. The Westmeath Local Enterprise Office provides an important service too by supporting those who are looking to start or grow a small business.

The Action Plan for Jobs for the Midland Region is another key tool to help boost employment in the area. Launched in June 2015, its core objective is the creation of an extra 14,000 jobs across the counties of Longford, Westmeath, Offaly and Laois by 2020. The Plan includes a series of actions aimed at attracting at least 25 additional multinational investment projects to the region by 2019.

### **Low Pay Commission Report**

702. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 901 of 31 May 2016, if she has received the report of the Low Pay Commission on the sub-minimum rates of the minimum wage which was due by the end of October 2016; if so, when she plans to publish the report; if not, when she expects the report to be completed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34940/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** Further to my reply to the question referred to, the Commission submitted its Report to me on the matter on October 28 last, and I propose to publish it shortly. It may be noted however, that the Commission did not consider it appropriate to make recommendations at this time, in the absence of up-to-date data from the Central Statistics Office which is pending validation. The likely timescale for the validation of this data is not yet confirmed.

The Commission has undertaken to submit its recommendations in a supplementary report as soon as the data is validated.

### **Employment Rights**

703. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the reason no consultation was held with ISME prior to the signing of the Employment Regulation (Amendment) Order (Contract Cleaning Joint Labour Committee) 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35117/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** Deputy, you will be aware that I signed the Employment Regulation (Amendment) Order (Contract Cleaning Joint Labour Committee) 2016 on October 27 last. (<https://www.djei.ie/en/Legislation/SI-No-548-of-2016.html>)

The making of the Order follows a public consultation on draft proposals that were developed by the Contract Cleaning Joint Labour Committee for an amended Employment Regulation Order for the Sector. This process was undertaken in August of this year when notice of making of the proposals was advertised in national newspapers on 18 August. That notice invited observations on the proposals to be submitted by 16 September. Copies of the draft

proposals were available from the Joint Labour Committees Secretariat and were also uploaded on the Workplace Relations website, [https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/news-media/Workplace\\_Relations\\_Notices/Contract\\_Cleaning\\_JLC\\_Draft\\_ERO.html](https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/news-media/Workplace_Relations_Notices/Contract_Cleaning_JLC_Draft_ERO.html)

The Joint Labour Committee (JLC) for the Sector, made up of representatives of the main unions and employers in the sector, considered submissions made and submitted their final proposals for pay and other terms to apply to workers in the Sector, to the Labour Court for consideration. Amongst other things, the JLC must have regard to the legitimate financial and commercial interests of employers in the sector in question. In this instance the Labour Court adopted the proposals and sent them to me. Being satisfied that the provisions of the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2012 were complied with, I signed the Order to effect the proposals.

### **IDA Supports**

704. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her policy in respect of the IDA granting financial support by way of grants, credits, employment benefits and discounts to IDA supported companies that are already here to encourage them to relocate further aspects of their business to other locations here; if the same packages are available in these situations compared with a new company that the IDA brings to the country; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35135/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** IDA Ireland's mission is to attract high-value foreign direct investment (FDI) to the country. The Agency achieves that by actively marketing Ireland as an investment location for international companies as well as supporting the growth and expansion of its client base already here. In furtherance of those goals, the Agency may provide grants to companies wishing to locate or expand their existing operations in Ireland. These include employment grants, capital grants and research and development grants.

All of the financial and non-financial supports used by IDA Ireland to attract new investors to the country are also available to existing clients here. It should be made clear, however, that the IDA does not actively encourage companies to relocate from one location within Ireland to another.

### **Retail Sector**

705. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the likely cost associated with changes specifically for small retailers with regard to proposals in the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015; if she engaged with small retailers on this matter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35145/16]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** As chair of the Retail Consultation Forum, I am very aware of the specific issues faced by the retail sector. The Forum provides a platform for my Department to engage directly with the concerns of retailers and its work programme is focused on maintaining the competitiveness of the sector. In so doing, we ensure that retail businesses are supported in identifying challenges that may impact on future competitiveness.

Currently, the Forum's work programme has four key areas of focus: reducing energy costs, maximising opportunities in the digital economy, identifying skills needs for the sector, and the

revitalisation of town centres. These working groups are focused on maximising the benefit of concrete initiatives and funding streams, such as the fund of €10 million made available by the Government this year for the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. Effective use of funds such as this will be of particular support to small and medium retailers.

In recent weeks, several members of the Forum have voiced concerns to me and publicly about the cost and compliance implications of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015. Notwithstanding these concerns, it is important to note that these organisations are very supportive of the overall aims of the Bill, given the justified public health concerns around harmful drinking patterns in Ireland, and they take the issue of alcohol retailing very seriously. Many of their members are also members of RRAI (Responsible Retailing of Alcohol in Ireland), an organisation which has also raised this issue with me recently.

My officials are engaging with the Department of Health to highlight the concerns voiced by retailers, while also supporting the central objective of the proposed Public Health (Alcohol) Bill, which is to reduce the level of harmful alcohol consumption in Ireland. The Retail Consultation Forum, which is meeting later this month, provides an additional platform for consultation on the matter.

### Registered Employment Agreements

706. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she will return funding to the electrical contractors following the new registered employment agreements (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35175/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** Deputy, you will be aware that a High Court challenge to the validity of the Electrical Contracting Registered Employment Agreement (REA), as well as the constitutionality of the Industrial Relations Act 1946, the legislation underpinning the REA system, was upheld in the High Court and appealed to the Supreme Court.

In its judgment delivered in May 2013, (in *McGowan and others v The Labour Court, Ireland and the Attorney General*), the Supreme Court held that Part III of the Industrial Relations Act 1946 was invalid having regard to Article 15.2.1 of the Constitution.

The effect of that decision was to invalidate the registration of employment agreements previously registered under Part III of the 1946 Act. In consequence the Labour Court no longer had jurisdiction to enforce, interpret or otherwise apply these agreements.

Existing contractual rights of workers in sectors covered by REAs were unaffected by the ruling. Contractual rights can be altered only by agreement between the parties involved.

However, the striking down of the REAs meant that new employees into the Sectors previously covered by REAs could be hired at any rate agreeable between workers and their employers, subject only to the provisions of the National Minimum Wage Acts.

Legal advice provided following the Supreme Court judgment indicates that while the decision had immediate effect on REAs registered pursuant to the 1946 Act it did not mean for example that monies paid by employers to employees pursuant to those REAs having been incorporated into contracts of employment could be recouped. It should be recalled that the monies involved relate to wages paid by employers to their own employees.

The Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 provides a replacement for Registered Em-

ployment Agreements in individual enterprises and a new mechanism whereby pay and pension and sick pay provisions in a particular sector can be established and enforced.

This new framework contains a mechanism whereby, at the request, separately or jointly from organisations substantially representative of employers and/or of workers, the Labour Court can initiate a review of the pay and pension and sick pay entitlements of workers in a particular sector and, if it deems it appropriate, make a recommendation to the Minister on the matter, who in turn, if satisfied that the process provided in the new legislation for the Labour Court to follow has been complied with, shall make the Order. Such an Order will be binding across the sector to which it relates and will be enforceable by the Workplace Relations Commission.

Since the Act came into effect on 1 August 2015, two such applications have been made to the Labour Court, one of which was from the TEEU and which was subsequently withdrawn.

### **Family Support Services**

707. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps she will take to provide support for families in the event of family breakdown; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34448/16]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla, the Child and Family Agency provides a range of supports for families, including those affected by family breakdown. These supports include, for example, the provision of counselling services.

I have asked Tusla to provide me with details of current service provision in this area and I will forward this information to the Deputy when available.

### **Foster Care Provision**

708. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to open a residential unit in County Donegal for children in foster care (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34674/16]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** At the end of June 2016, there were 209 children in care in Donegal with over 96% in foster care, broken down by 79% in general foster care and 17% in relative foster care. There was less than 2% in general residential care with the remainder in other placements determined by their care plan. This compares very favourably with the national figure of just over 93% of children in care in foster care.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has confirmed that the purpose and function of the centre in Letterkenny remains under consideration while the premises is being upgraded. The local placement needs, as determined by social work services in the area, will be taken into account when deciding on the future of the centre.

### **Homeless Persons Supports**

709. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.4 to continue operating the Dublin region protocol relat-

ing to child protection and welfare concerns; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35033/16]

710. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs following the publication of the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.5; the supports and initiatives that have been established for families in emergency accommodation to mitigate the challenges that such parents and children face; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35034/16]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 709 and 710 together.

Homelessness among children and families remains a serious problem. In September there were 1,173 families in emergency accommodation, including 1,568 adults and 2,426 dependents. I am committing to supporting implementation of *Rebuilding Ireland: the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*. We have made some progress in this regard, but more remains to be done.

In relation to Action 1.4 of the Plan, the joint protocol between Tusla and the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) governing child welfare and protection matters has been fully operational since approval in June 2016. A review of the protocol has already commenced and will be concluded early December 2016. It is intended to replicate this protocol across the State. However, the current protocol would not necessarily fit as a national template as organisational set up differs across the country. Accordingly, the protocol will need to be tailored to individual local authorities. This work will take place on a phased basis commencing in Q1 2017 and will continue throughout the year.

Action 1.5 commits to strengthening the supports and initiatives that have been established for families in emergency accommodation to mitigate the challenges that such parents and children face. My Department and others have undertaken a number of initiatives as part of this Action.

The DRHE is working to provide free public transport for family travel and for school journeys for those homeless families in the Dublin Region who are residing in hotel accommodation. Each family is being given five 24-hour family LEAP cards, which will be valid for use on all Dublin transport systems, allowing for family days out at weekends or during holiday periods. Distribution of the family cards is almost complete. This will be quickly followed by the distribution of the school journey cards.

My Department is funding research, commissioned by Focus Ireland, to identify issues regarding access to food and potential nutritional impacts on families in emergency homeless accommodation.

My Department is also enhancing access to early years services for homeless families through a new Community Childcare Subvention Scheme for homeless children. It will provide part-time childcare for children aged between 0 and 6 years of age. It is planned to launch the Scheme next January.

Also, I recently secured the agreement of the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government that the provision of accommodation for young people leaving State care would be eligible for funding under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) operated by his Department. My Department and Tusla will work to ensure that any accommodation proposed, and ultimately delivered, will be provided with the appropriate levels of protective factors for the young person making the transition to independent living.



Many of the remaining child-focussed actions in the Action Plan are being advanced by Tusla and progress is being made on several fronts. This year, Tusla provided funding to Focus Ireland for additional child support workers to assist with the challenges facing families in emergency accommodation and I will be requesting Tusla to examine the possibility of funding for similar initiatives in 2017.

### **Homeless Persons Supports**

711. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.6; the details of the safety guidance and voluntary code for child safety in emergency accommodation that has been put in place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35035/16]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy with the most up-to-date information.

### **Domestic Violence Refuges Provision**

712. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs following the publication of the action plan for housing and homelessness four months ago the status of the progress made to date on action 1.8; the details of the additional emergency refuge accommodation spaces that are to be provided and the details of a specific timeframe; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35037/16]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** In 2016, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency has allocated funding of €20.6m for a network of some 60 organisations providing services to victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in Ireland. Almost €12.0m is provided for emergency refuge and support services and a further €4.6m is provided for other community based domestic violence support services. The level of expenditure in this area will further increase in 2017, arising from the provision of €37m in additional funding to Tusla for services generally.

Tusla provides revenue funding towards the running costs of emergency refuge accommodation. The local authorities continue to have responsibility for capital funding in respect of this service. In the current year, Tusla is providing funding to support the provision of six additional family units of emergency accommodation in Dublin and Kildare.

Tusla is engaged with a number of specialist domestic violence service provider organisations and other stakeholders about additional provision to support families in safe accommodation in 2017 and beyond. Tusla's focus is on achieving the optimum use of emergency shelter accommodation and effective community based services to avoid in so far as possible the need for use of refuges by vulnerable women and families.

My priority, and that of Tusla, is to ensure that the needs of women and children fleeing domestic violence are being met in the most effective way possible. I am committed to continuing support for these vital services.

### **Preschool Services**



713. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the case of a person with special needs (details supplied) whose pre-school applied for AIM level 7 funding in early September 2016; the time frame for the application process to be completed and for a decision to be made and communicated to the person's family; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34555/16]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), which is a new programme of supports to enable children with a disability to access and fully participate in the free pre-school programme, is administered by Pobal on behalf of this Department. The degree of support provided will depend on the needs of the child in the context of the pre-school service.

This Department has made enquiries of Pobal in relation to your query. It is understood that this application has been processed and that the decision has been communicated to the parent(s) and pre-school service.

### Children in Care

714. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the criteria according to which a child may be removed from the care or custody of its mother directly or soon after birth; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34581/16]

715. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of cases since 2011 when a newborn child has been removed from the care or custody of its parents directly or soon after birth; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34582/16]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 714 and 715 together.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has a statutory duty under the Child Care Act 1991 to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection and, if necessary, to receive a child into the care of the State. Social workers employed in maternity hospitals engage with vulnerable mothers to assess their capacity to care for their new born babies and, if necessary, will contact the local social work department in Tusla. When a social work department receives a referral regarding child protection concerns a social worker completes an assessment of those concerns. If the outcome of the assessment demonstrates that a child is at significant risk of harm or neglect, and that work with the family has failed to address that risk then an application is made to the Courts for a care order. Children are only separated from parents/carers when alternative means of protection have been exhausted. Re-union is always considered in the context of planning for the child's future.

Tusla has confirmed that it does not collect a metric that collates the number of newborn children taken into care directly or soon after birth. Data regarding the number of children who were under 1 year old and in care on 31st December for the years 2011 to 2015 is set out in the following table.

| Year | Number of children under 1 year old in care |
|------|---|
| 2011 | 136   |
| 2012 | 148   |
| 2013 | 136   |
| 2014 | 139   |

| Year | Number of children under 1 year old in care |
|------|---|
| 2015 | 121   |

### Family Resource Centres

716. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to increase the funding allocation to the family resource centre, FRC, programme in view of the budget 2017 increase to Tusla's budget; if she will allocate €21.126 million for the FRC national programme to support voluntary boards of management in meeting the basic operational costs for the 109 FRCs throughout the country; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34662/16]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Arising from Budget 2017, I will shortly be issuing Tusla with its 2017 Performance Statement in line with the provisions of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013. Tusla will, in response to the Performance Statement, prepare a Business Plan for 2017 which will be submitted to me for consideration.

The precise level of funding to be allocated to the Family Resource Centre Programme will be considered by Tusla, in preparing its Business Plan, having regard to the overall level of funding available in 2017, which will exceed €700m, including the additional Budget 2017 provision.

It is not my intention to prescribe the overall level of funding to be allocated by Tusla to family support services, including the Family Resource Centre Programme. It is more appropriate, in my view, that Tusla first sets out its proposals for this important service area, having regard to its statutory remit and taking account of the totality of funding available next year.

### Children in Care

717. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if it is contrary to the Children (Amendment) Act 2015 to place a child aged between three and ten years of age in a residential care facility for the purposes of assessment. [34975/16]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Children (Amendment) Act 2015 amends the Children Act 2001 and is primarily concerned with the detention of children in respect of criminal matters. It does not relate to residential care for children, which is provided for in the Child Care Act 1991.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, operates under the Child Care Act 1991 and the Child and Family Agency Act 2013. These Acts are not amended by the Children (Amendment) Act 2015.

Under the Acts of 1991 and 2013 referred to above, there is no prohibition on a child aged between three and ten years old being placed in a residential care facility for the purpose of assessment.

As the Deputy is aware, in terms of independent oversight, HIQA inspects children's residential care services provided by Tusla. HIQA also monitors such settings operated by Tusla against the National Standards for Children's Residential Services.

### **Military Honours**

718. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he has made representations to President Michael D. Higgins seeking the formal invitation and recognition of the members of A Company, 35th Battalion, UN service, of the Army ONUC contingent renowned for its struggle during the siege of Jadotville during the United Nations intervention in the Katanga conflict in Congo in 1961; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34963/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** On the occasion of the 55th anniversary of the Siege of Jadotville, I decided to issue a Unit Citation to honour the collective actions and bravery of the men of “A” Company, 35th Infantry Battallion. My Department organised and hosted a ceremony in Custume Barracks, Athlone on Saturday, 17 September 2016 at which a Unit Citation was presented to the Company in recognition of their collective heroism and professional performance during the Siege of Jadotville whilst cut-off from support and reinforcements.

During the ceremony a copy of the Citation was presented to each member of the Unit or next-of-kin in the case of deceased members. This was the first time a Unit Citation was awarded within the Defence Forces and I was delighted to be able to formally recognize the collective bravery and actions of the men of “A” Company, 35th Infantry Battallion. In addition, a specially commissioned insignia, which is currently being procured, will be provided to the members and the next of kin of deceased members of “A” company.

These recent steps to honour and recognise the bravery of those who served with “A” Company, 35th Infantry battalion build upon previous initiatives taken by former Ministers for Defence as follows:

A. In November 2005, a plaque was unveiled in Custume Barracks Athlone to commemorate the events at Jadotville and the very significant contribution of “A” Company and of the 35th Battalion, as a whole, to the UN Peace Support Mission in the Congo.

B. There was a presentation of scrolls in 2006.

C. Portraits of Lt Col McNamee (35th Battalion Commander) and Comdt Quinlan (Company Commander “A” Company) were commissioned. On the 23 February 2007 these portraits were unveiled at the Military College and now hang in the Congo Room in the United Nations Training School in the Curragh.

D. In July of 2010 the 50th anniversary of the first deployment to the Congo was commemorated in a highly publicised and well attended event in Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell. A Congo photographic book was also produced for the occasion; a section of which was dedicated to the events at Jadotville in 1961.

E. A nominal roll of “A” Company, printed in copper, has been affixed to the monument in Costume Barracks and was unveiled as part of the 50th Anniversary of the Jadotville affair in September 2011.

I am satisfied that the events and happenings to date properly honour the bravery of the men of “A” Company.

### **Ministerial Travel**

719. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of

overseas trips the Minister of State with responsibility for defence has taken since the formation of the Government; and the precautionary measures taken before each trip. [34407/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** Since I was appointed Minister with Responsibility for Defence in May 2016 I have undertaken six overseas trips in total to the following locations: Warsaw (Partnership for Peace), Lebanon (UNIFIL), Sardinia (Pontus), London (UN Peacekeeping Conference), Mali (EUTM Mali) and Brussels (Foreign Affairs Council/Defence).

Where deemed necessary an assessment of the security situation in the location being visited is undertaken by the Defence Forces, as a precautionary measure, before each trip.

### **Defence Forces Personnel Data**

720. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of men and women from County Waterford that are currently members of the Defence Forces; and the number of these who are based overseas. [34639/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I am informed by the military authorities that there are a total of 211 members of the Defence Forces with addresses in Waterford, of which 15 are serving overseas. The overseas figure includes one member of the Naval Service currently serving with Operation PONTUS in the Mediterranean.

### **Commemorative Events**

721. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason the annual ceremony to honour deceased members of the Defence Forces which was due to take place at the national defence monument in Merrion Square on Sunday, 6 November 2016, was cancelled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34646/16]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The National Day of Commemoration is held annually by the State in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. Annual commemorations are also held by the Defence Forces at the National Memorial in Merrion Square during the summer months. In addition commemorations are held in military barracks during November.

A commemoration to honour deceased members of the Defence Forces was conducted in November 2015 at the National Memorial in Merrion Square on a pilot basis. Having considered the pilot, I am satisfied that deceased members of the Defence Forces are already appropriately remembered at dignified commemorations throughout the year and there is no requirement for a further public commemoration.

Arrangements are currently being made to award the 1916 Centenary Commemorative Medal to all members of the Defence Forces who have served during this centenary year of 2016. It is a fitting tribute and thank you from the Government, on behalf of the people of Ireland, to our Defence Forces and it is my intention to recognise also the service of Members of the Defence Forces who passed away during 2016.