

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 6, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 7 to 10, inclusive, resubmitted.

Cabinet Committees

11. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach if he will establish a Cabinet Committee on Housing. [32518/17]

The Taoiseach: As I indicated to the House last week, the Government has agreed to streamline the Cabinet Committee structure and approved the establishment of five committees. One of these, Cabinet Committee D, will cover housing, climate action, infrastructure investment and delivery, and the National Planning Framework. Among other issues, this Committee will provide political oversight of our efforts to address the housing and homelessness crisis and our transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy.

Providing affordable, quality and accessible housing is a priority in the Programme for a Partnership Government. The previously constituted Cabinet Committee on Housing met regularly to oversee development and then implementation of the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. On 14 June, I outlined to the House my view that while Rebuilding Ireland is working, it may not be enough. I tasked Minister Murphy to review the Plan within three months and to consider what additional measures may be required. That review has started, while work continues on implementing the Actions already in the Plan.

Questions Nos. 12 to 15, inclusive, resubmitted.

Seanad Reform

16. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on Seanad reform. [32473/17]

17. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the position regarding the commitment in the programme for government in relation to Seanad Éireann reform. [33013/17]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 16 and 17 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, in the Programme for a Partnership Government, the Government stated its commitment to pursuing the implementation of the Report of the Working Group on Seanad Reform (the Manning Report).

That Report was published in 2015 and it is available on my Department's website.

One of the recommendations of the Report was the establishment of an Implementation Group to oversee implementation of the reforms contained in the Report.

As my predecessor previously said in the House, he agreed with a suggestion made here some time ago by Deputy Martin that this Group should be based in the Oireachtas and should comprise members of the Dáil and Seanad from all parties and groups, with access to independent expert advice as required. He wrote to Party Leaders in September last year seeking their agreement to this approach and their intention to participate. Contacts are continuing with parties to finalise nominations with a view to having the Group up and running as soon as possible.

Questions Nos. 18 and 19 resubmitted.

Ministerial Meetings

20. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Taoiseach if during the recent European Council meeting he asked the Greek Prime Minister the position regarding securing European monitoring of a case (details supplied). [32515/17]

The Taoiseach: I saw the Greek Prime Minister in the margins of the meeting of the European Council in Brussels on 22/23 June. I took the opportunity to give him a copy of the letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to his Greek counterpart, regarding monitoring of the case. I can assure the Deputy that the Government remains committed to doing all that it can to secure the earliest possible return of Ibrahim Halawa to Ireland.

Cabinet Committees

21. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach if he will establish a Cabinet Committee on Education. [32519/17]

The Taoiseach: Government recently approved the establishment of five new Cabinet Committees.

As part of these changes Cabinet Committee B will now cover Social Policy and Public Services including Education, Children, Equality, Social Inclusion, Justice, Arts, Irish and the Gaeltacht, and Public and Civil Service Reform. Membership of the Committee has been changed accordingly to reflect these changes.

Questions Nos. 22 and 23 resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 24 to 31, inclusive, answered orally.

Garda Data

32. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in County Galway as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32859/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to main-

tain 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Galway Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 9 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Galway Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information, I have set out below in tabular form the number of Gardaí assigned to the Galway Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, as provided by the Commissioner.

GALWAY DIVISION 31 MAY 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
BALLINASLOE	AHASCRAUGH	1
	BALLINASLOE	40
	BALLYGAR	1
	CREGGS	1
	MOUNT BELLEW	7
	MOYLROUGH	1
	TOTAL	51
CLIFDEN	AN MÁM	2
	CARNA	1
	CLIFDEN	32

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DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
	CLOCH NA RÓN	1
	LETTERFRACK	1
	SRAITH SALACH	1
	TOTAL	38
GALWAY	ATHENRY	3
	GAILLIMH	214
	LOUGH GEORGE	2
	MONIVEA	1
	ÓRÁN MÓR	41
	TOTAL	261
LOUGHREA	CRAUGHWELL	4
	EYRECOURT	1
	GORT	28
	KILLIMOR	1
	KILRICKLE	1
	KINVARA	2
	LOUGHREA	36
	PORTUMNA	7
	WOODFORD	1
	TOTAL	81
SALTHILL	AN CHEATHRÚ RUA	5
	AN SPIDÉAL	2
	CILL RÓNÁIN	4
	INDREABHÁN	1
	LEITIR MÓIR	1
	MAIGH CUILINN	1
	ROS MUC	1
	SALTHILL	53
	UACHTARARD	3
	TOTAL	71
TUAM	BARNADERG	1
	DUNMORE	6
	GLENAMADDY	1
	HEADFORD	3
	MILLTOWN	1
	TUAM	56
	WILLIAMSTOWN	1
	TOTAL	69
GALWAY TOTAL		571

Questions Nos. 33 and 34 answered orally.

Child Protection

35. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the actions being taken within his Department to ensure child protection is a priority when it comes to education of children and families regarding safe Internet usage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31222/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department seeks to promote awareness of internet safety and to highlight its importance for parents, children and young people alike. The Office for Internet Safety (OIS) was established in my Department in 2008. As a small unit, it aims to build linkages and cohesion between relevant Departments and agencies to promote internet safety, particularly in relation to combating child pornography. A dedicated website www.internetsafety.ie provides information primarily aimed at parents as well as links to a variety of other resources on internet safety. In addition, the unit provides a series of information booklets on internet safety which are made available on the website and also in hard copy.

An Internet Safety Advisory Committee (ISAC) advises the OIS and includes representatives from An Garda Síochána, academia, relevant non-government organisations, the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as well as industry etc. At a European level, the website www.betterinternetforkids.eu gathers and makes available best practice examples, including some from Ireland, on safer internet for children and makes them available in a variety of languages.

The EU Safer Internet Programme for Ireland operates through my Department, channelling EU funding to four partner bodies:

- Webwise in Professional Development Service for Teachers Technology in Education (a part of the Department of Education and Skills) - this programme raises awareness of online safety issues and promotes good practice among students, their parents and teachers.
- Childline - a helpline and other services for children and operated by the ISPCC.
- the National Parents Council (Primary) which operates a helpline and provides training for parents and
- Hotline.ie which deals with reports of illegal content on the internet in Ireland.

My Department also keeps the criminal law up to date in this area as required. For example, the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, has addressed criminal law aspects of the Law Reform Commission's Report on Harmful Communications and Digital Safety, including a number of measures to significantly strengthen existing criminal law in combating child exploitation - in particular to address the use of modern communication technologies as a tool which may lead to child sexual exploitation.

An Garda Síochána has an arrangement in place with a large internet service provider to block access to child sexual abuse content in accordance with a list they provide. Among the aims of this initiative is to reduce inadvertent viewing by members of the public, including children, of this illegal and/or harmful material. An Garda Síochána also has a Schools Programme where personal safety issues, including online safety, are highlighted and discussed with children and young people in schools.

Finally, my Department works with other relevant Government Departments in this area. As the Deputy may be aware, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment has the lead role in terms of the National Cyber Security Strategy and is also considering the Law Reform Commission's recommendation for the establishment of a Digital Safety Commissioner.

Questions Nos. 36 and 37 answered orally.

Garda Resources

38. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which adequate numbers of gardaí are in training at Templemore with particular reference to the need to increase Garda strength at the various stations throughout the country and with reference to those areas deemed to have experienced greatest reductions during the economic downturn; the targets to increase Garda strength over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32966/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 2,400 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next three years in addition to the 2,000 recruited that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014.

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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves. I am engaging with my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, in relation to ensuring funding is available to allow sufficient recruitment into An Garda Síochána in 2018 and the coming years so that the planned overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is achieved.

The workforce plan is progressing apace. So far this year, there have been two intakes to the Garda College of two hundred trainees in February and May with a further two intakes of 200 planned for August and November giving a total intake of 800. It is expected that the planned schedule of intakes will continue into 2018. Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September to 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. In addition to this, a further 800 Garda trainees are expected to attest in 2018.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across the organisation.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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.

In so far as the allocation of newly attested Gardaí is concerned, I am assured by the Com-

missioner 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 training and development structures and resources in place, including trained Garda tutors and access to a permanently appointed supervisory Sergeant who is thoroughly familiar with their responsibilities under the training programme.

Garda Accommodation

39. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the capital investment that is being made in Garda facilities in Tubbercurry. [32842/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close co-operation with the Office of Public Works which has the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

The Garda Station Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021 is an ambitious 5 year Programme, based on agreed Garda priorities, that will benefit over thirty locations around the country. It includes over €60million of Exchequer funding as part of Government's Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 as well as a major Public Private Partnership project.

The Programme, does not include provision for Tubbercurry Garda station. However, I am informed that, in late 2016, An Garda Síochána requested the OPW to carry out an assessment of works required to provide additional accommodation and facilities at the station.

I understand that An Garda Síochána continues to engage with the OPW to consider the full detail of the OPW's assessment with a view to identifying the priority works that could be undertaken to enhance the facilities of the station.

Garda Data

40. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in County Louth as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32870/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September to 2014. This brings the

number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Louth Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 59 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Louth Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information, I have set out below in tabular form the number of Gardaí assigned to the Louth Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, as provided by the Commissioner.

LOUTH DIVISION 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
ARDEE	ARDEE	25
	CASTLEBELLINGHAM	2
	COLLON	5
	LOUTH	1
	TOTAL	33
DROGHEDA	CLOUGHERHEAD	3
	DROGHEDA	98
	DUNLEER	6
	TOTAL	107
DUNDALK	BLACKROCK	4
	CARLINGFORD	4
	DRUMAD	7
	DUNDALK	136
	HACKBALLSCROSS	4
	OMEATH	3
	TOTAL	158
LOUTH DIVISION TOTAL		298

Garda Data

41. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in counties Longford and Roscommon as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32879/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Roscommon/Longford Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 5 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Roscommon/Longford Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information, I have set out below in tabular form the number of Gardaí assigned to the Roscommon/Longford Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, as provided by the Commissioner.

ROSCOMMON/LONGFORD DIVISION 31 MAY 2017

DISTRICT	DIVISION	TOTAL
CASTLEREA	BALLAGHADERREEN	10
	BALLINLOUGH	2

	BOYLE	26
	CASTLEREA	38
	ELPHIN	2
	FRENCHPARK	2
	KEADUE	1
	ROOSKY	3
	STROKESTOWN	5
	TULSK	2
	TOTAL	91
GRANARD	DRUMLISH	2
	EDGEWORTHSTOWN	11
	GRANARD	33
	SMEAR	1
	TOTAL	47
LONGFORD	BALLYMAHON	10
	KENAGH	1
	LANESBORO	6
	LONGFORD	70
	TOTAL	87
ROSCOMMON	ATHLEAGUE	1
	CLONARK	6
	ROSCOMMON	71
	TOTAL	78
ROSCOMMON / LONG-FORD TOTAL		303

Migrant Integration

42. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will establish a time bound scheme with transparent criteria to regularise the position of undocumented migrants here. [32687/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): There are no plans to introduce a general regularisation scheme for those who are currently illegally in the State. Any such proposal could give rise to very large, unpredictable and potentially very costly impacts across the full range of public and social services, particularly as there may well be significant implications for the operation of the Common Travel Area, in the context of Britain withdrawing from the European Union. Any proposal in this regard would have to be very carefully considered.

In addition, at the European level, Ireland together with the other Member States of the European Union has committed under the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum agreed at the European Council in October 2008 “to use only case-by-case regularisation, rather than generalised regularisation, under national law, for humanitarian or economic reasons”. While the Pact is not legally binding, the political commitment among Member States, then and now, is clearly against any form of process that would in any way legitimise the status of those unlawfully present without first examining the merits of their individual cases.

Ireland operates a very open immigration policy with many legal pathways open to non-

EEA nationals to legally enter and reside in the State. The Deputy will appreciate that, in most cases, a person becomes undocumented through their own actions either by entering the state illegally in the first place or by deciding not to leave the State when they no longer have a valid immigration permission. Such persons are always free to present their case, on its own merits, to the immigration authorities and it is reasonable for the State to expect that the persons concerned would respect the final decision.

I will, of course, give proper consideration to the Report on Immigration, Asylum and the Refugee Crisis published by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality on 29 June 2017. In particular I will examine if elements of the recommendations can be acted upon, having regard to our international commitments and the domestic implications that any general amnesty or regularisation might entail.

The Deputy may also wish to note that the Economic and Research Institute (ESRI) recently published a study on the illegal employment of non-EEA nationals. It is important to stress that the study examined the situation of both those who had no immigration permission to be in the State and those who were working in breach of an immigration permission which might exclude or limit their access to the labour market. The ESRI concluded that there was no reliable data on the numbers of persons undocumented or illegally employed in Ireland. They did, however, identify certain characteristics of this group and concluded that the areas at high risk of illegal employment and being undocumented, include; the catering sector (such as takeaway, fast food and ethnic restaurants) and those working in the private home involved in child and elder care. The report also points to the enforcement work of the Workplace Relations Commission and the Garda National Immigration Bureau with particular focus on employers who engage in employing and potentially exploiting illegal workers.

Commercial Rates

43. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce new legislation regarding commercial rates valuations; and when this bill will be enacted. [33016/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, there is a distinct separation of function between the valuation of rateable property, which is the responsibility of the Commissioner of Valuation, and the setting and collection of commercial rates, which is a product of the valuation set by the Commissioner, multiplied by the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) decided annually by the elected members of each local authority. The Commissioner of Valuation is currently under the aegis of my Department but operates independently in carrying out his statutory functions under the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015 and my Department has no role in this regard.

It is worth noting that the annual setting of the ARV is a reserved function of the elected members of each Local Authority and neither the Commissioner of Valuation nor central Government have any function in that regard.

In so far as legislation relating to the valuation of properties for rating purposes is concerned, there is a modern, up to date code of legislation in place. The entire body of Valuation Acts dating from the 19th Century was repealed, modernised and consolidated when the Valuation Act 2001 came into force on 2 May 2002. A number of improvements to the 2001 Act mainly in relation to accelerating the National Revaluation Programme were introduced by the Valuation (Amendment) Act 2015 which was commenced on 8 June 2015. Accordingly, my Department has no plans at this time to introduce new legislation in relation to the valuation of

property for commercial rates purposes.

Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation under the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015. The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority.

Commercial rates (which fall under the auspices of my colleague, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government) form an important element of the funding of all local authorities. I understand, however, that the legislative basis for the levying of rates is spread over a number of enactments, some dating back to the 19th Century. Many of the provisions are outdated and not suited to current business practise. I am advised that the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government has developed legislative proposals to modernise and consolidate the legislation governing commercial rates and the Government recently approved the drafting of a Rates Bill in this regard.

Garda Data

44. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in County Kerry as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32854/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Kerry Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the dis-

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tribution 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 Commissioner that 20 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Kerry Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information, I have set out in tabular form the number of Gardaí assigned to the Kerry Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, as provided by the Commissioner.

KERRY DIVISION 31 MAY 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
KILLARNEY	CAHERCIVEEN	17
	GLENBEIGH	1
	KENMARE	11
	KILLARNEY	58
	KILLORGLIN	13
	PORTMAGEE	1
	SNEEM	1
	WATERVILLE	1
	TOTAL	103
LISTOWEL	BALLYBUNION	8
	BALLYHEIGUE	1
	KNOCKNAGOSHALL	1
	LISTOWEL	42
	LIXNAW	1
	TARBERT	2
	TOTAL	55
TRALEE	AN DAINGEAN	9
	ANNASCAUL	1
	ARDFERT	2
	BAILE AN FHEIRTEÁRA-IG	1
	CASTLEGREGORY	2
	CASTLEISLAND	30
	CASTLEMAINE	1
	FARRANFORE	2
	TRALEE	103
	TOTAL	151
KERRY TOTAL		309

Tribunals of Inquiry

45. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the unit set up within An Garda Síochána to liaise with the disclosures tribunal, in view of reports of personal ties between the Garda Commissioner and members of the unit and questions raised both in the media and in Dáil Éireann over a potential conflict of interest in this regard and that

the Commissioner is being investigated as part the tribunal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32752/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): First of all let me say for the benefit of the Deputy that the Disclosures Tribunal was appointed following the passing of Resolutions by this House and Seanad Éireann on 16 February 2017. Those resolutions require the Tribunal to report to the Clerk of Dáil Éireann with its findings and recommendations. Therefore, I do not propose to say or do anything which could be interpreted as impinging on its independence.

Furthermore, I would also remind the House that the sole member, Mr Justice Peter Charleton, has indicated that the Tribunal has issued orders for the discovery of documents and other records. In those circumstances, it is incumbent on anyone who is a party before the Tribunal to cooperate fully with it.

The Garda Commissioner has statutory responsibility to carry on and manage and control generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Accordingly, the putting in place of internal structures to service the Tribunal is a matter for the Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Similarly, the selection of personnel to support those structures is a matter for the Commissioner. I do not believe that it would be proper for me as Minister to prescribe the approach which is taken by An Garda Síochána towards the Tribunal. I would be open to criticism if I were to seek to influence how An Garda Síochána fulfil their duties to the Tribunal. On this point, I would say that matters relating to representation before the Tribunal will ultimately be decided by the Tribunal itself. In light of these factors it would not be appropriate to comment on the arrangements which have been made by An Garda Síochána or, indeed, any other parties in relation to their engagement with the Tribunal.

On a general note I would like to reiterate that the Government has, rightly, been anxious to ensure that the Disclosures Tribunal receives the greatest degree of assistance possible from all parties, not least An Garda Síochána. It has been supportive of the Commissioner in ensuring that she has the resources at her disposal to service the Tribunal in a timely and effective manner, so that it in turn may proceed with and complete its work without delay. I am advised that the services of two former members of An Garda Síochána (a former Chief Superintendent and a former Assistant Commissioner) have been engaged for a period of six months to 31 August 2017. My Department was not consulted nor should it have been in relation to the selection of the particular individuals concerned.

The work of the two retired members supports the Disclosure Tribunal Co-Ordination Office based in Garda Headquarters which is staffed by one full-time member, seconded temporarily from the Office of Corporate Communications. A number of additional personnel are facilitating the work of this office on an ad hoc basis as requirements dictate. I am further informed that liaison persons have been nominated from relevant sections/Regions to deal with specific requests from the Tribunal.

It should be understood that the provision of these additional resources is to ensure that An Garda Síochána as an organisation is able to cooperate with the Tribunal to the fullest extent, without unduly affecting the ability of the organisation to continue to carry out its normal vital work. That said, there is nothing in the arrangements put in place by the Commissioner to prevent, nor could they, the right of any individual member of An Garda Síochána to make any representations they see fit, relevant to its terms of reference, to the Tribunal.

Finally, as the Deputy will be aware, the Tribunal has commenced public hearings and I repeat that it is important that everyone should allow the Tribunal to get on, unimpeded, with the very important work with which it has been tasked.

Departmental Funding

46. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the funding of a second sexual abuse and violence in Ireland report. [32975/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): A second Sexual Assault and Violence in Ireland study (SAVI 2) would show the prevalence of and attitudes to sexual violence and elucidate how the experience has changed since SAVI 1. The overall cost of a report is likely to be in the order of €1 million over three years. A formal proposal submitted by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre recognised that, given the significant budget, funding would be divided between four Departments - the Departments of Justice and Equality, Children and Youth Affairs, Education and Skills, and Health. My predecessor wrote to the relevant Ministers on this matter and expressed her support for the project. The responses received make the viability of funding the project, as proposed, unlikely.

However, my Department continues to investigate the financial feasibility, resource implications and approaches to identifying a ring-fenced funding stream for undertaking a SAVI 2 study and to explore obligations with regard to requisite public procurement arrangements. While I strongly recognise the value of further research in this area, I am sure the Deputy will accept that the right balance must be struck between the funding of front-line services and funding research. I will, however, continue to pursue this matter.

In the meantime, there are other sources of statistics that can be accessed. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) 2014 pan-European survey report on violence against women provides details of the prevalence of sexual violence by a partner or non-partner experienced by those women surveyed who are resident in Ireland. This data source has the advantage of providing the possibility of data comparisons with each of the other 27 member states of the EU. Discussions have begun at a Eurostat level to explore the possibility of some form of replication of the FRA survey. There is also the June 2016 pan-European Eurobarometer survey on perceptions, attitudes and awareness of gender-based violence. Figures on sexual violence in Ireland are also available from the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, the Rape Crisis Network Ireland, the Central Statistics Office / An Garda Síochána, the Courts Service and Sexual Assault Treatment Units.

In addition, the Central Statistics Office are to explore the feasibility of including a module on sexual violence in its next roll-out of its crime and victimisation survey. If it becomes an ongoing element of data gathering in CSO's crime and victimisation survey, the information gleaned from this work will provide indications of trends over time of peoples' experiences of such violence.

Crime Prevention

47. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of proposals to install cameras on motorways to help fight against crime. [32674/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to supporting investment in CCTV systems at key locations along the road network and in urban centres.

In this context, I am pleased to inform the Deputy that, on 13 April 2017 in pursuance of this commitment, a new Community-based CCTV grant-aid Scheme was launched by my Department to assist groups in the establishment of community-based CCTV systems in their local

areas.

Under the Scheme, which is being administered by my Department, eligible community groups can apply for grant-aid of up to 60% of the total capital cost of a proposed CCTV system, up to a maximum grant of €40,000. Upon approval of the grant, the applicant will receive an up-front payment of 50% of the grant with the balance to be paid when the system is fully operational.

Full details of the grant aid package including guidelines, application forms, code of practice and other relevant documentation are all available to download from my Department's website - www.justice.ie.

I am very conscious of the value that communities, especially rural communities, place on CCTV as a means of deterring crime and assisting in the detection of offenders and I would encourage interested groups to avail of the Scheme.

In addition, the Garda authorities inform me that, as of 5 March 2017, there are some 35 Garda CCTV schemes in operation throughout the State comprising in excess of 500 cameras. There are also some 45 Community-based CCTV schemes, established under the previous grant-aid scheme funded by my Department between 2005 and 2013, in operation encompassing some 367 cameras to which An Garda Síochána have access.

Under the Commissioner's Modernisation and Renewal Programme, the intention is to use CCTV in new ways utilising modern technology and to expand the use of ANPR technology to allow for wider access and analysis, to identify key criminal and terrorist targets and to enhance community safety.

This is underpinned by significant Government investment under the Capital Plan of some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million to provide 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.

Garda Resources

48. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to provide additional Garda resources in the Dublin metropolitan region southern Garda division. [32886/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) South Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 96 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the DMR South Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information, I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Garda assigned to the DMR South Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

D.M.R. SOUTH DIVISION 31 MAY 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
CRUMLIN	CRUMLIN	99
	SUNDRIVE ROAD	61
	TOTAL:	160
TALLAGHT	RATHFARNHAM	60
	TALLAGHT	182
	TOTAL:	242
TERENURE	RATHMINES	62
	TERENURE	81
	TOTAL:	143
D.M.R. SOUTH TOTAL		545

Garda Data

49. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in County Waterford as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32847/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Waterford Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 39 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Waterford Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Gardaí assigned to the Waterford Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

WATERFORD DIVISION 31 MAY 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
DUNGARVAN	AGLISH	1
	ARDMORE	1
	BALLYMACARBERRY	1
	CAPPOQUIN	2
	DUNGARVAN	41
	LISMORE	3
	TALLOW	2
	TOTAL	51
TRAMORE	KILMACTHOMAS	10
	TRAMORE	37
	TOTAL	47
WATERFORD	DUNMORE EAST	2
	FERRYBANK	4

DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
	PASSAGE EAST	1
	WATERFORD	172
	TOTAL	179
WATERFORD TOTAL		277

Garda Equipment

50. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to fit members of An Garda Síochána with body cameras to record their daily duties. [32889/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the provision of equipment for An Garda Síochána and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I understand from the Garda authorities that in June 2012, fifteen body worn cameras were procured with the purpose of carrying out a technical evaluation of the technology and to evaluate a body worn system which would provide an alternative to the use of video camcorders. These units were intermittently used by the Specialist Training School in the Garda College as part of Garda training courses.

I have been informed that a working group within An Garda Síochána is currently examining the options available on the market regarding body worn cameras, with a view to developing a business case in the event that it is decided to recommend the general use of body worn cameras by members of An Garda Síochána.

Crime Investigation

51. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the extent of intimidation of families and young persons in relation to drug dealing and drug debt, particularly in Dublin; the way in which this can be dealt with; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32681/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The drug related intimidation brought to bear against members of the community, and often our most vulnerable communities, is a serious challenge which I am determined that our criminal justice system should address. Community Policing initiatives and building trust with communities are integral to successfully tackling this issue. The Garda National Drugs Unit and the National Family Support Network developed “the Drug Related Intimidation Reporting Programme” to respond to the needs of drug users and family members experiencing drug related intimidation as laid out in the Government’s National Drugs Strategy.

Work is well underway in regards to a comprehensive and integrated new National Drugs Strategy for the period post 2016 and An Garda Síochána remains resolute in its determination to act against those within society who pose a significant threat to the welfare and well-being of our citizens and the communities it serves. The continued disruption of the supply of all illicit drugs remains a priority for all agencies tasked with responsibilities in this regard.

As things stand, an Inspector has been selected in every Garda Division to respond to the issue of drug related intimidation. These Inspectors are of Management level within An Garda Síochána and liaise directly with their local Superintendent in relation to each individual case.

Persons seeking the assistance of the Inspector in their area may contact their Inspector to arrange to meet with them either formally or informally. It is also possible for a person to ask a local family support worker or drugs worker to contact the Garda Inspector for their area or ask the National Family Support Network to contact the relevant Inspector. If anyone experiences difficulty contacting the relevant Garda Inspector they can contact the Project Office at the Garda National Drugs Unit. The contact details for the nominated Garda Inspectors are available on the Garda website.

In dealing with any complaint of drug related intimidation or advice sought in relation to this issue the Garda Síochána do so with the utmost safety and effective means in order to afford the person or family subject to the threat of the best level of security, advice and support which can be offered. Most importantly the Garda Síochána will deal with this issue in the utmost confidential and secure fashion.

At the heart of the concerns expressed by the Deputy, is the relationship between communities and their local Gardaí. It is worth recalling that the Programme for a Partnership Government underlines the importance of community policing in responding to the concerns and expectation of both urban and rural communities. I would like to re-affirm that the Government remains committed to supporting the Gardaí to make communities safer. The Government has devoted very significant resources for policing in recent years, and this will continue, in particular through the accelerated programme of Garda recruitment. This undoubtedly will enhance policing services for all communities across the country.

An Garda Síochána is involved in a variety of activities, including local and Regional drug and alcohol Task Forces, Garda youth diversionary projects, the juvenile diversion programme, the Garda schools programme and the conducting of proactive operations designed to address drug supply in communities.

However, I would also like to emphasise that, in particular where communities experience intimidation, Joint Policing Committees have a very important role in facilitating consultation, cooperation and synergy on policing and crime issues between An Garda Síochána, Local Authorities and elected local representatives and active and constructive engagement by elected members is very important.

Policing Authority

52. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to strengthen the Garda Síochána (Policing Authority and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015 in order to increase the powers of the Policing Authority with regard to monitoring transparency, providing oversight and ensuring accountability, particularly in view of the ongoing crises within An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32754/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the Policing Authority is an independent statutory body established on 1 January 2016 to oversee the performance of An 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.

The statutory basis for the Authority is the Garda Síochána (Policing Authority and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015, which amended the Garda Síochána Act 2005. The establishment of the Policing Authority represents one of the most significant developments in policing since the founding of the State.

The Authority is tasked with overseeing the performance of the Garda Commissioner in respect of the very wide remit of all policing services, while developing a key role in the future appointment of senior Garda management and civilian staff and driving reform of the policing system and practices. Since its establishment on 1 January 2016, I believe that the Policing Authority has proven to be very effective in the performance of its functions in this regard. For example in its first year of existence, the Authority has met with the Commissioner and her senior team on 13 occasions. It has approved a three-year Strategy for An Garda Síochána. It has also determined the policing priorities for 2017 which informed the content of the 2017 Policing Plan which it also approved. In addition, it has reviewed and issued recommendations on the Garda Protected Disclosure policy and has also published a Code of Ethics that includes standards of conduct and practice for Garda members.

The Deputy will also be aware that the Report of the Joint Committee on Justice and Equality on Garda Oversight and Accountability, published in December 2016, includes a number of recommendations in relation to the statutory remit of the Authority. I want to make it clear that the Government is fully supportive of the Authority having appropriate powers so that it can carry out its oversight functions in an efficient and effective manner. However, I would draw the attention of the Deputy to the provisions of section 62O of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, which requires the Authority to prepare a report on the effectiveness of the Authority and the adequacy of the functions assigned to it by the legislation. The report can contain recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the Authority and is required to be submitted to me, as Minister, within 2 years of the establishment of the Authority. There is also a requirement for the report to be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Thus, the legislation envisages that it would be prudent for the Authority to examine, after a reasonable period of time, whether it is adequately empowered to carry out its oversight functions. In this manner, an informed decision can be taken in due course, having due regard to the views of the Authority and, of course, the Report of the Committee, as to whether additional powers would be needed by the Authority and the nature of any such powers.

Road Traffic Legislation

53. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to review with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport all relevant legislation regarding the ownership and use of scramblers and quads with a view to introducing appropriate legislation to deal with the issue of youths continuing to use these scramblers and quads in parks, streets and neighbourhoods without insurance and the difficulty being experienced by Gardaí in stopping these youths and seizing and retaining these quads and scramblers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32887/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Further to the Deputy's parliamentary Question No. 55 of 23 May 2017 in relation to this matter, I share the concerns of my predecessor, the Tánaiste, in relation to the public safety and anti-social issues associated with the misuse of such vehicles. It is a very serious issue. The Deputy will be aware that the use of mechanically propelled vehicles, including quad bikes and scramblers, in a public place is subject to the relevant requirements of road traffic legislation. I am advised by the Garda authorities that these vehicles, when used in a public place, must comply with the Road Traffic Acts, including in relation to motor tax, insurance and possession of a valid driver licence or learner permit. Under the Road Traffic Acts, any member of An Garda Síochána is allowed to stop a mechanically propelled vehicle in a public place and demand production of a driver licence or learner permit. In addition, Gardaí may inspect the vehicle for compliance with vehicle

standards legislation, which makes it an offence to drive without reasonable consideration, drive carelessly, or drive dangerously. The Garda authorities also have powers of seizure, detention, storage and disposal of vehicles under road traffic legislation.

I am further informed that the use of quad bikes and scramblers in public parks and open spaces is strictly prohibited by the local authorities under the Parks and Open Spaces Bye-Laws 2011.

Despite the road traffic and other relevant legislation available in this area, the Garda authorities have indicated that the use of quad bikes and scramblers by minors and youths in public parks has proven difficult to deal with from an enforcement perspective. Garda members are instructed not to pursue youths on quad bikes, scramblers, etc. owing to the inherent safety risk in pursuing these vehicles. If such pursuits were to take place, there would be a high risk of these ending in collisions at speed resulting in serious injury or death, so the opportunity to actually bring these vehicles to a stop is rare.

The Garda authorities have advised that the issue is one which is best addressed through a multi-agency approach. In this regard, Gardaí are working with local authorities, including park authorities, to examine other solutions, such as engineering solutions. Enhanced fencing and bike gates are examples of engineering measures taken to restrict access to parks.

To better facilitate this multi-agency approach, I have written to the relevant parties, including the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, as well as the Garda Commissioner and the Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners, in order to ascertain whether there are additional legislative or other solutions which can assist us in dealing with this issue more comprehensively.

Garda Civilian Staff

54. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of civilianisation within An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32890/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The most recent available figure for the number of civilians working in An Garda Síochána is for 31 May 2017, at which point there were 2,110 civilian staff members working throughout the organisation carrying out senior management, administrative and technical roles.

As part of its Five Year Reform and High-level Workforce Plan for An Garda Síochána, the Government has agreed an overall vision for a Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 to include 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Garda Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. This very substantial investment in personnel is driven by our commitment to ensure all citizens have the reassurance of a visible, responsive and effective policing service. The projected number of 4,000 civilians will effectively double the current figure and represents a medium-term target of a Garda organisation 20% comprised of civilians. That will bring An Garda Síochána, currently 14% comprised of civilians, more in line with international norms and ensure that trained Gardaí are not engaging in administrative and technical duties which could be done by suitably qualified civilian staff.

The 20% target will be achieved through a twin-track approach of, firstly, 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, secondly, the redeployment of Gardaí and backfilling by suitably qualified civilians where necessary. In its ‘Changing Policing in Ireland’ report, the Garda Inspectorate has estimated that there may be

up to 1,250 Gardaí currently in such posts and the Government's plan aims to return as many of these Gardaí as possible to front-line duties over the next five years. With this in mind, the Garda Commissioner, in conjunction with the Policing Authority, has been requested to identify posts suitable for redeployment and to prepare a 5 year plan for reaching the 20% medium term target.

Funding for the recruitment of up to 500 civilians has been provided in Budget 2017 to facilitate the Commissioner in addressing capacity and critical skills gaps across the organisation including in corporate supports, change management, human resources and financial management at the national, regional and Divisional level. These appointments are intended to facilitate deeper civilianisation in the coming years.

To date, the Policing Authority (with the consent of the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform) has approved 137 of these positions including two new senior posts of Executive Director Strategy and Change Management and Executive Director Legal and Compliance. The Government has also agreed in principle to the positions of a Chief Information Officer. The majority of the positions sanctioned are in the areas of ICT, Human Resources, Governance and Strategy, Legal and Compliance, and Finance. 43 of the initial 137 sanctioned posts will go towards back filling vacancies created by the redeployment of Garda members to policing duties. Garda management has indicated that some 163 of the total 500 civilians to be recruited this year will lead to redeployment opportunities.

This level of commitment in the first year is very welcome and it is expected that the quantum of redeployments will increase in 2018 and beyond.

The Garda Commissioner has statutory responsibility for recruitment and is working with the Public Appointments Service to fill these sanctioned posts. In addition there is ongoing engagement between Garda management, the Policing Authority, my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to sanctioning further posts to meet identified business needs across the organisation and draw down the funding that is available for up to 500 additional civilians this year.

Garda Data

55. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in counties Sligo and Leitrim as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32863/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last

year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Sligo/Leitrim Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 13 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Sligo/Leitrim Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Gardaí assigned to the Sligo/Leitrim Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

SLIGO / LEITRIM DIVISION 31 MAY 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
BALLYMOTE	BALLYMOTE	32
	ENNISCRONE	7
	GURTEEN	2
	RIVERSTOWN	3
	TUBBERCURRY	9
	TOTAL	53
LEITRIM	BALLINAMORE	7
	CARRICK-ON-SHANNON	51
	CARRIGALLEN	2
	DRUMSHAMBO	5
	KINLOUGH	4
	MANORHAMILTON	21
	MOHILL	6
	TOTAL	96
SLIGO	COLLOONEY	5
	GRANGE	6
	ROSSES POINT	1
	SKREEN	1
	SLIGO	136
TOTAL	149	

DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
SLIGO / LEITRIM TOTAL		298

Garda Reform

56. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on whether the Garda Commissioner can deliver the reforms necessary for a well functioning, transparent and accountable police force in view of the recent controversies within An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32750/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have full confidence in the Garda Commissioner as she proceeds with the implementation of the most ambitious programme of reform ever embarked on by An Garda Síochána.

Last July the Government approved a Five Year Reform and High Level Workforce Plan for An Garda Síochána which combines the Government's response to the Garda Inspectorate report 'Changing Policing in Ireland' and the commitments in the Programme for a Partnership Government aimed at increasing the visibility, effectiveness and responsiveness of An Garda Síochána. The Government agreed that the Commissioner's Modernisation and Renewal Programme (MRP) 2016-2021 would be the vehicle for implementation of the recommendations. In support of this plan, Budget 2017 provided funding to continue to expand the number of Gardaí towards 15,000, to double the Reserve and to double the number of civilians by 2021. In addition, the plan is supported by substantial capital investment of some €310 million in critical ICT infrastructure, the fleet and other Garda facilities.

Robust independent oversight is essential to ensuring that the pursuit of the reform programme is relentless over the next 5 years. To ensure that this is case, the 240 agreed recommendations have been referred to the Policing Authority to monitor and assess their implementation by An Garda Síochána and to report progress to me on a quarterly basis. The first two progress reports have already been published on my Department's website.

I believe the only way to deliver world class policing in Ireland is to ensure that An Garda Síochána has the resources it needs and that those resources operate in an organisation whose culture is open and responsive and where the best management systems and practices are deployed. I am confident that the reform plan that is being pursued by the Commissioner, supported by the Government and overseen by the Policing Authority, has the capacity to achieve this. It will not be done overnight and it will not be done easily, but with the necessary support and oversight, it can be achieved over the next four years.

Naturalisation Applications

57. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason 554 persons have been waiting three years or more for their naturalisation citizenship application to be processed; his views on whether this is an acceptable amount of time to be waiting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33006/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, 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.

It is recognised that all applicants for citizenship would wish to have a decision on their application without delay. While most straightforward cases are generally processed within six months, the nature of the naturalisation process is such that, for a broad range of reasons, some cases will take longer than others to process. In some instances, completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time, particularly with regard to establishing whether the statutory conditions for naturalisation as set out in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, such as good character and lawful residence are satisfied. In considering the number of cases referred to by the Deputy it should be borne in mind that since 2011 almost 110,000 persons have been granted a certificate of naturalisation.

Cases where delays in processing can arise are generally due to further documentation being required from the applicant and/or payment of the required certificate fee is awaited, or the applicant has not been engaging with the office. In some instances delays can arise at the final stage of the naturalisation process, for example where additional information comes to light which requires further investigation. In other instances the applicant may request that a hold be put on their application, for example where they may have returned to their country of origin for a prolonged period, to facilitate them in making arrangements to return to reside in the State, or where they have difficulty in obtaining satisfactory evidence of their identity or nationality.

I am informed that the Citizenship Division of my Department are conducting an ongoing review of outstanding cases with a view to substantially reducing the number of applications which await decision, particularly where the applicant has not been engaging with the office.

Child Protection

58. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans regarding the implementation of the report by a person (details supplied); and the timeframe for these actions to be taken. [27841/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the work of Dr. Shannon and his team for the role they played in producing such a comprehensive analysis in relation to the use of Section 12 of the Child Care Act 1991.

Clearly, there are great sensitivities and trauma associated with the removal of a child from their parent or legal guardian. However, Section 12 of the Child Care Act 1991 is an essential legal mechanism through which the Garda Síochána performs its child protection function, and it is only used as a measure of last resort.

It is important to recognise that Dr. Shannon's report indicates that Gardaí use these powers following careful consideration of the circumstances and available evidence. It also speaks very highly about the efforts made by Members of An Garda Síochána in treating children with sensitivity and compassion.

I am advised that An Garda Síochána has commenced an examination of all the recommendations contained in Dr. Shannon's report and will engage with Tusla and other relevant State agencies to address how the recommendations might be implemented, as well as how soon they can be implemented.

As the Deputy is aware, many of the issues highlighted in the report come within the remit of my colleague the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. I will, of course, assist Minister Zappone in this urgent task, and I can assure the Deputy that An Garda Síochána will be fully supported in pursuing the very necessary reforms to policies, procedures and practices that are identified in the Report.

Garda Data

59. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in County Mayo as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32861/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday, 6 July, a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Mayo Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 13 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Mayo Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Gardaí assigned to the Mayo Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

MAYO DIVISION 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
BALLINA	BALLINA	46
	BONNICONLON	1
	CROSSMOLINA	4

MAYO DIVISION 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
	FOXFORD	2
	KILLALA	2
	TOTAL	55
BELMULLET	BALLYCROY	1
	BANGOR ERRIS	2
	BÉAL AN MHUIRTHEAD	26
	GLEANN NA MUAIDHE	1
	TOTAL	30
CASTLEBAR	BALLA	2
	CASTLEBAR	81
	PARTRY	2
	TOTAL	85
CLAREMORRIS	BALLINDINE	1
	BALLINROBE	8
	BALLYHAUNIS	8
	CHARLESTOWN	4
	CLAREMORRIS	35
	CONG	1
	KILKELLY	6
	KILMAINE	2
	KILTIMAGH	1
	KNOCK	1
	SHRULE	1
	SWINFORD	22
	TOTAL	90
WESTPORT	ACHILL SOUND	5
	KEEL	1
	LOUISBURGH	2
	NEWPORT	3
	WESTPORT	31
	TOTAL	42
MAYO TOTAL		302

Garda Investigations

60. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will commission a public inquiry into the death of a person (details supplied) and the Garda investigation and subsequent prosecution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32970/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware this tragic case was considered under the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) and the recommendation was that no further action should be taken. Counsel for the IRM pointed out that the appropriate forum for raising matters related to alleged Garda failings was the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) who were already investigating certain matters arising from the tragic death in this case, in part referred by a previous Minister for Justice and

Equality.

GSOC is an independent statutory body and the manner in which they conduct their investigation is a matter for them. I am advised, however, that GSOC's report is at final draft stage and currently under review by the GSOC Commission. However, I can inform the Deputy that I am advised that GSOC's investigation is nearing completion and that GSOC have been in contact with the family about the final report of that investigation.. We must now await their final determination. It must also be noted that a civil action has been initiated against the State in respect of issues raised in the complaint.

When the then Taoiseach and my predecessor met with the family last November, a commitment was given that when the GSOC investigation is completed and the final report is to hand the question of whether, and if so, what further action can be taken, will be considered. That remains the position.

I am sure the Deputy will appreciate that in the circumstances it would not be appropriate for me to comment further.

Garda Deployment

61. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to address the lack of Garda personnel in the Border region; his plans to rectify the shortages at various ranks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32976/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 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.

The area referred to by the Deputy is covered by the Cavan/Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo/Leitrim and Louth Divisions. I have been informed that the number of Gardaí assigned to these Divisions on the 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 1,301 with 80 Garda Reserves and 119 civilians. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

This plan is progressing apace. I am informed by the Commissioner, since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, that almost 1,200 recruits have attested as members

of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 120 of whom were assigned to the Cavan/Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo/Leitrim and Louth Divisions. I am also informed that a further four hundred are scheduled to attest later this year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - an increase of 500 since the end of 2016.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

For the Deputy's information, I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Gardaí assigned to the Cavan/Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo/Leitrim and Louth Divisions and the number of Garda Reserve and civilians associated with these Divisions on 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are currently available.

Division	Garda	Reserve	Civilians
Cavan/Monaghan	322	12	37
Donegal	383	20	31
Sligo/Leitrim	298	19	26
Louth	298	29	25
Total	1,301	80	119

Garda Data

62. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí assigned and currently working in the traffic corps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32888/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of resources, including to the Garda Traffic Corps and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. I am assured by the Commissioner that Garda personnel assigned throughout the country, together with the overall policing arrangements and operational strategies are continually monitored and reviewed. Such monitoring ensures that optimum use is made of resources and the best possible policing service is provided to the general public.

I am informed by the Commissioner that the total strength of the Garda Traffic Corps on the 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 663. In addition, there is a Chief Superintendent and a Superintendent attached to the DMR Traffic Corps, and a Superintendent attached to the West and South East Region. The other three Regions each have a Traffic Inspector.

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 to 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.

This plan is progressing well. This year, 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Traffic Corps in the coming years.

The Commissioner has committed in her Policing Plan for 2017 to increase incrementally the number of personnel dedicated to traffic duties by 10% to support better outcomes in relation to road traffic enforcement.

In this regard the Commissioner has confirmed that the personnel requirement of the Garda Traffic Corps is currently being assessed to identify the most vulnerable areas in regard to serious traffic collisions and the level of compliance with Road Traffic legislation. Combined with this data I am informed that the Assistant Commissioner, Roads Policing and Major Event/Emergency Management is currently assessing the capacity of Divisions and Districts to identify and target areas where An Garda Síochána could accelerate the deployment of personnel to traffic in 2017. The filling of the vacancies identified will be conducted on a structured basis and will be further enhanced with the new recruits coming on stream.

Road traffic legislation is, of course, 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 Road Policing which will inform and guide An Garda Síochána's Road Policing plans over the next 5 years. Under the Programme, the Commissioner will undertake a number of road safety traffic enforcement initiatives, including expanding the use of technology and increasing checkpoints.

Garda Stations

63. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has satisfied himself that the current approach to delivering the new Garda station for Macroom is working fast enough; the timeframe for its availability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32677/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close cooperation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), which has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation. This includes identifying and progressing any necessary remedial or refurbishment works re-

quired at individual stations. As Minister, I have no direct role in these matters.

As the Deputy will be aware, the proposed development of a new Garda station at Macroom is among the projects included in the Garda Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021. This is an ambitious 5 year Programme that will benefit over thirty locations around the country and includes over €60million of Exchequer funding as part of Government's Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 as well as a major Public Private Partnership project to build new stations at Macroom, Clonmel and Sligo.

The OPW is engaging closely with An Garda Síochána to secure the sites for the proposed builds and, thereafter, work will progress as quickly as possible to deliver the projects.

Visa Applications

64. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to examine the restrictions on visa applications from Libyan citizens, especially those in the medical professions who have offers of employment here, in view of the problems in retaining and recruiting staff in hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32973/17]

75. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to review the visa restriction on Libyan citizens, especially medical professionals who are facing delays and refusals on visa applications despite being offered work in hospitals here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32969/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 64 and 75 together.

Deputies will know that certain restrictions have been in place since August 2014 due to the political and security situation in Libya. My predecessor indicated recently that these would be reviewed by officials to consider if there may be some scope to extend the categories of applicants who may be considered for visa processing.

That review has been completed and I am advised that all relevant considerations included the ongoing security situation in Libya (which unfortunately remains volatile), the potential economic impact of these restrictions and overall security considerations for the State. Ultimately, an appropriate balance must be struck between State security and individual applicants who wish to come here.

Taking all this into account, the Tánaiste decided that that the existing approach continue to be taken to processing those visa applications which we are prepared to consider, and therefore the current restrictions should remain in place for a further six months. The position will continue to be kept under review with consideration being given to any scope to extend the categories of applicants who may be considered for visa processing.

Wards of Court

65. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date on which the wards of court office will be able to automatically provide statements to the committees of wards of court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32684/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the High Court has jurisdiction in wards of court matters 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.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that, while the importance of issuing statements to wards of court is fully appreciated, an increased caseload in the Wards of Court Office and staffing constraints has meant that it is necessary to prioritise the allocation of resources available in that office. As a result of increased caseloads a backlog in processing applications for wardship arose but it is expected that the backlog will be cleared by the end of this month as additional resources have been assigned to the Office. This in turn had an impact on the progress that could be made in relation to the automatic provision of statements.

As the Deputy will be aware, currently individual statements in regard to funds held in court on behalf of wards of court are provided on request to the respective committees of the wards of court. The Courts Service has advised that it is working to enable statements to be provided automatically to the committees of wards of court, which will commence by mid September 2017. These statements will be high level reports on the funds in court and their performance and, if more detailed reports are required, they can be made available on request. Significant progress has been made and it is hoped to commence the issuing of the statements on a phased basis this quarter.

Criminal Assets Bureau

66. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the work of the Criminal Assets Bureau at local and regional levels; and the work of the profiling groups that are targeting lower and middle level drug dealing in communities in Dublin. [32682/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Criminal Assets Bureau takes actions under the Proceeds of Crime Acts 1996 to 2016 to deprive or to deny persons of assets which derive, or are suspected to derive, directly or indirectly from criminal conduct; or the benefit of such assets.

Sections 2 and 3 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 1996 provide the mechanism under which the Bureau can apply to the High Court seeking to freeze or restrain a person /entities dealing with a specific asset. In accordance with these provisions, the High Court may, in circumstances where an interim order or interlocutory order under that legislation is in place, appoint a receiver in respect of the property to which the order relates.

Section 4 provides for the transfer of property to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. This Section refers to assets which have been deemed to be the proceeds of criminal conduct, for a period of not less than seven years, and over which no valid claim has been made under Section 3(3) of the Proceeds of Crime Act.

Section 4A allows for a consent disposal order to be made by the respondent, thus allowing the property to be transferred to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in a period shorter than seven years.

In accordance with the provisions of the Criminal Assets Bureau Act 1996 an annual report on the activities of the Bureau is prepared and laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The reports include details of the number of receivership orders obtained, the values of such orders and the amounts realised by the Bureau to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for the benefit of the Central Exchequer in the particular year. The Annual Reports are

available in the Oireachtas library and on the website of An Garda Síochána and my Department. The Annual Report of the Bureau for 2016 is awaiting publication in the coming weeks.

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 288 plus Revenue Customs and Social Protection trained asset profilers making a total of 311 asset profilers throughout the State.

To further assist the Bureau 6 additional members of An Garda Síochána were temporarily seconded to the Criminal Assets Bureau to support the operation of the recently established Special Crime Task Force.

The Deputy will be aware from media reports that a series of targeted search operations conducted in the recent past resulted in local criminals being targeted, these criminals having been nominated by either the CAB Profilers or the Special Crime Task Force.

With regard to the specific information sought, I can inform the Deputy that this information is not available. The Bureau operates on a national basis, targeting assets wherever they are situated and the Bureau does not record its activities on a geographical basis.

Garda Data

67. Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in County Donegal as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32865/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Donegal Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 22 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Donegal Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Gardaí assigned to the Donegal Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

DONEGAL DIVISION 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
BALLYSHANNON	AN CHARRAIG	1
	ARD AN RÁTHA	2
	BALLYSHANNON	39
	BUNDORAN	7
	DONEGAL TOWN	23
	MOUNTCHARLES	1
	NA CEALLA BEAGA	6
	NA GLEANNTA	12
	PETTIGO	1
	TOTAL	92
BUNCRANA	BUNCRANA	44
	BURNFOOT	4
	CARNDONAGH	9
	CLONMANY	1
	MOVILLE	5
	MUFF	3
	TOTAL	66
LETTERKENNY	BALLYBOFEY	23
	CARRIGANS	3
	CASTLEFIN	4
	CONVOY	1
	LETTERKENNY	112
	LIFFORD	13
	NEWTOWNCUNNINGHAM	2
	RAPHOE	2
TOTAL	160	
MILFORD	AN BUN BEAG	14
	AN CLOCHÁN LIATH	7
	AN CRAOSLACH	1
	AN FÁL CARRACH	9

DONEGAL DIVISION 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
	CARRAIG AIRT	2
	DÚN FIONNACHAID	2
	KERRYKEEL	2
	KILMACRENNAN	1
	MILFORD	26
	RATHMULLEN	1
	TOTAL	65
DONEGAL TOTAL		383

Garda Investigations

68. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will establish an inquiry on the manner in which the protestors at Jobstown in November 2014 were investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32974/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As was mentioned by the Taoiseach in the House last week, the issues relating to the recent trial of persons involved in water-charge protests in Jobstown, including Deputy Murphy, have been considered and processed by the appropriate State authorities, which are established under the Constitution and by Statute enacted by the Oireachtas. Following a Garda investigation and consideration by the DPP, the matter in question was brought to trial, and a duly constituted jury of the accused's peers gave its verdict. It appears to me that this is absolutely in keeping with our system of justice, and the separation of powers, which is designed to ensure fairness and equality before the law.

I am, of course, aware of various concerns and criticisms which have been made in some quarters about these matters. Needless to say it is clearly inappropriate for this House to engage in a critique of the decisions or conduct of independent bodies such as the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) or indeed the Courts.

In relation to the concerns which have been voiced about the role of An Garda Síochána in this case, I note that An Garda Síochána are conducting an internal review regarding the policing response and subsequent investigation into this matter. Notwithstanding this review, Deputies will be aware that there are well-established and independent structures for bringing of complaints about the conduct of Gardaí, through the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC).

It is my view that this matter has been fully aired and brought to a conclusion before the Courts, which are the ultimate arbiters of justice in this State. Therefore, I see no reason to establish any other form of inquiry into this matter.

Garda Data

69. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in County Limerick as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32855/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): This Government is com-

mitted 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Limerick Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 33 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Limerick Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Gardaí assigned to the Limerick Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

LIMERICK DIVISION 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
BRUFF	BALLYLANDERS	1
	BRUFF	27
	BRUREE	1
	CAPPAMORE	2
	HOSPITAL	2
	KILMALLOCK	6
	MURROE	2
	PALLASGREEN	2
	TOTAL	43

HENRY STREET	ARDNACRUSHA	3
	CASTLECONNELL	4
	HENRY STREET	241
	MAYORSTONE PARK	62
	TOTAL	310
NEWCASTLE WEST	ABBAYFEALE	8
	ADARE	2
	ASKEATON	10
	ATHEA	1
	CROOM	3
	DRUMCOLLOGHER	2
	FOYNES	1
	NEWCASTLE WEST	38
	PALLASKENRY	1
	RATHKEALE	10
	TOTAL	76
ROXBORO ROAD	BALLYNEETY	2
	CAHERCONLISH	2
	PATRICKSWELL	2
	ROXBORO ROAD	123
	TOTAL	129
LIMERICK TOTAL		558

Ministerial Responsibilities

70. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the responsibilities between him and the Ministers of State at his Department; and his views on whether an additional Minister of State with responsibility for equality and law reform would be useful for his Department. [32676/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, Ministers of State are appointed by the Government, on nomination of the Taoiseach.

In accordance with the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) (No.2) Act 1977, the Government may delegate, by way of an Order, to a Minister of State any of the powers and duties of the relevant Minister of the Government under any particular Act or any particular statutory power or duty.

As you will appreciate the Department of Justice and Equality has a broad remit and my responsibilities include:

- the security of the State
- the protection of life and property
- the prevention and detection of crime
- maintaining and promoting fairness and equality
- services for the buying and selling of property

- managing inward migration to the State
- providing a Courts Service
- updating our criminal and civil laws
- developing the Insolvency Service
- various other regulatory services

Mr. David Stanton TD was recently reappointed Minister of State for Justice at the Department of Justice and Equality with special responsibility for Equality, Immigration, and Integration.

I am currently in the process of securing formal Government approval to delegate powers and duties to Minister Stanton, in line with the powers previously delegated to him under Statutory Instrument 422 of 2016 .

The role and functions of Ministers of State may of course extend beyond those powers formally delegated under statute, and Minister Stanton's responsibilities include human rights and equality (excepting disability policy) matters, matters relating to the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, reception and integration matters, various EU finding matters and matters relating to youth justice that fall under the responsibility of the Department of Justice and Equality.

Mr. Finian McGrath TD remains Minister of State attending Government and Minister of State at the Departments of Social Protection, Justice & Equality and Health with special responsibility for Disabilities.

Mr. Pat Breen TD was appointed Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Employment and Social Protection, the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Justice and Equality with special responsibility for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection in June 2017, having served as Minister of State for Employment and Small Business from May 2016. □Minister Breen's responsibility within my Department is in respect of Data Protection matters.

The potential nomination of any additional Ministers of State is a matter for the Taoiseach and the Government to determine; I am satisfied that the Ministers of State attached to my Department have important and appropriate responsibilities and I am looking forward to working with them to progress the priorities in the Agreed Programme for Government.

Garda Data

71. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in County Tipperary as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32882/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday 6th July, a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September to 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Tipperary Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 36 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Tipperary Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Gardaí assigned to the Tipperary Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

TIPPERARY DIVISION 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
CAHIR	ARDFINNAN	1
	BALLYPOREEN	1
	CAHIR	52
	CASHEL	13
	CLOGHEEN	1
	TOTAL:	68
CLONMEL	CARRICK-ON-SUIR	13
	CLONMEL	55
	FETHARD	1
	KILSHEELAN	1
	MULLINAHONE	1
	TOTAL:	71
NENAGH	BORRISOKANE	2
	CLOUGHJORDAN	1
	LORRHA	1
	MONEYGALL	1

TIPPERARY DIVISION 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
	NENAGH	47
	NEWPORT	11
	PORTROE	1
	ROSCREA	18
	TOOMEVARA	1
	TOTAL:	83
THURLES	BALLINGARRY SOUTH	1
	BORRISOLEIGH	1
	HOLYCROSS	1
	KILLENAULE	3
	TEMPLEMORE	23
	TEMPLETUOHY	1
	THURLES	77
	TOTAL:	107
TIPPERARY TOWN	CAPPAWHITE	1
	GOLDEN	1
	TIPPERARY TOWN	37
	TOTAL:	39
TIPPERARY TOTAL		368

Garda Data

72. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in County Meath as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32871/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September to 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Meath Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 36 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Meath Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Gardaí assigned to the Meath Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

MEATH DIVISION 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
ASHBOURNE	ASHBOURNE	46
	DULEEK	5
	DUNBOYNE	16
	DUNSHAUGHLIN	23
	LAYTOWN	21
	TOTAL:	111
KELLS	BAILE ÁTHA BUÍ	5
	KELLS	33
	OLDCASTLE	3
	TOTAL:	41
NAVAN	NAVAN	90
	NOBBER	3
	SLANE	4
	TOTAL:	97
TRIM	BALLIVOR	2
	ENFIELD	3
	LONGWOOD	2
	SUMMERHILL	2
	TRIM	36
	TOTAL:	45
MEATH TOTAL:		294

Garda Data

73. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in County Clare as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32857/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Clare Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 20 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Clare Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Gardaí assigned to the Clare Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

CLARE DIVISION 31 MAY 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
ENNIS	CRUSHEEN	1
	ENNIS	119
	IMMIGRATION OFFICE	7
	KILLALOE	28
	NEWMARKET ON FERGUS	3
	SCARIFF	6
	SHANNON	56

	SIXMILEBRIDGE	4
	TULLA	2
	TOTAL	226
KILRUSH	BALLYVAUGHAN	1
	COROFIN	2
	ENNISTYMON	26
	KILDYSART	1
	KILKEE	2
	KILMIHIL	1
	KILRUSH	40
	LISDOONVARNA	1
	TOTAL	74
CLARE TOTAL		300

Departmental Inquiries

74. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on initiating an independent inquiry into the Garda investigations into the Jobstown protest case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32994/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As was mentioned by the Taoiseach in the House last week, the issues relating to the recent trial of persons involved in water-charge protests in Jobstown, including Deputy Murphy, have been considered and processed by the appropriate State authorities, which are established under the Constitution and by Statute enacted by the Oireachtas. Following a Garda investigation and consideration by the DPP, the matter in question was brought to trial, and a duly constituted jury of the accused's peers gave its verdict. It appears to me that this is absolutely in keeping with our system of justice, and the separation of powers, which is designed to ensure fairness and equality before the law.

I am, of course, aware of various concerns and criticisms which have been made in some quarters about these matters. Needless to say it is clearly inappropriate for this House to engage in a critique of the decisions or conduct of independent bodies such as the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) or indeed the Courts.

In relation to the concerns which have been voiced about the role of An Garda Síochána in this case, I note that An Garda Síochána are conducting an internal review regarding the policing response and subsequent investigation into this matter. Notwithstanding this review, Deputies will be aware that there are well-established and independent structures for bringing of complaints about the conduct of Gardaí, through the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC).

It is my view that this matter has been fully aired and brought to a conclusion before the Courts, which are the ultimate arbiters of justice in this State. Therefore, I see no reason to establish any other form of inquiry into this matter.

Question No. 75 answered with Question No. 64.

Garda Training

76. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on the levels of training provided to members of An Garda Síochána in upholding persons' right to protest; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33003/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including by arranging for the training of its members and civilian staff and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

An Garda Síochána is committed to providing a professional, well-led and well managed policing service which is grounded in human rights principles. The importance attached to human rights compliance in policing in Ireland is highlighted by section 7 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005. This section sets out the functions of the Garda Síochána, which include providing policing and security services with the objective of protection of life and property and of vindicating the human rights of each individual.

I am informed by the Commissioner that all Gardaí recruited since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014 undertake the new 2 year training programme which leads to a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Policing and is accredited by the University of Limerick. The programme is the outcome of a comprehensive review of foundation training for entrants to An Garda Síochána and exemplifies best practice. The programme embeds human rights and ethical policing as a core programme outcome. It ensures that ethics, human rights, values and community are considered in the management of all policing situations, and it seeks to provide a continuity of learning around these issues from problem-based learning in the Garda College to work-based learning in the Garda divisions. New members of An Garda Síochána now make a declaration of the need to have regard for human rights in carrying out policing duties.

Human rights training also forms part of the training provided by the 'Continuous Professional Development' staff allocated to each of the Garda Divisions for serving members of An Garda Síochána.

A very significant recent development in this regard is the Code of Ethics for An Garda Síochána published by the Policing Authority last January. It defines in clear terms the principles to guide the decisions that those in policing make in everything they do. The Code has a statutory basis under the 2005 Act and was developed by the Authority and An Garda Síochána in conjunction with stakeholders. The emphasis of the Code is on what good policing looks like and how police officers and staff should behave. The Code sets out nine standards of conduct and practice for everyone in An Garda Síochána. These standards must be carried out in a manner that is independent and impartial, that respects human rights, and that supports the proper and effective administration of justice.

Of particular relevance is the standard in relation to police powers which commits all members of An Garda Síochána to respecting the human rights of all people, including the right to freedom of expression; to freedom of assembly and association; and to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.

The Policing Plan 2017 contains a commitment by An Garda Síochána to embed this Code into the day to day thinking and actions of the organisation, through the development of a communications plan to inform and educate all Garda personnel including reserves and civilians in relation to ethical matters and to embed the Code into all training programmes. Work in this regard is currently progressing with options for the delivery of the communications plan and training programme being examined.

Ministerial Meetings

77. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will meet the family of a person (details supplied) regarding an inquiry into their death and the subsequent events around the Garda investigation and court proceedings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32972/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware this tragic case was considered under the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) and the recommendation was that no further action should be taken. Counsel for the IRM pointed out that the appropriate forum for raising matters related to alleged Garda failings was the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) who were already investigating certain matters arising from the tragic death in this case, in part referred by a previous Minister for Justice and Equality.

GSOC is an independent statutory body and the manner in which they conduct their investigation is a matter for them. I am advised, however, that GSOC's report is at final draft stage and currently under review by the GSOC Commission. However, I can inform the Deputy that I am advised that GSOC's investigation is nearing completion and that GSOC have been in contact with the family about the final report of that investigation. We must now await their final determination. It must also be noted that a civil action has been initiated against the State in respect of issues raised in the complaint.

When the then Taoiseach and my predecessor met with the family last November, a commitment was given that when the GSOC investigation is completed and the final report is to hand the question of whether, and if so, what further action can be taken, will be considered. That remains the position.

The Deputy will appreciate that in the circumstances a meeting with myself at this stage would not serve any useful purpose and that it would not be appropriate for me to comment further.

Garda Data

78. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in counties Laois and Offaly as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32844/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last

year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Laois/Offaly Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 56 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Laois/Offaly Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Gardaí assigned to the Laois/Offaly Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

LAOIS / OFFALY 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
BIRR	BANAGHER	5
	BIRR	29
	CLOGHAN	1
	FERBANE	4
	KILCORMAC	2
	KINNITTY	1
	SHINRONE	1
	TOTAL	43
	PORTLAOISE	ABBEYLEIX
ARLES		1
BALLYLINAN		2
BORRIS-IN-OSSORY		1
CLONASLEE		1
DURROW		1
MOUNTMELICK		5
MOUNTRATH		3
PORTARLINGTON		14
PORTLAOISE		122
RATHDOWNEY		2
STRADBALLY		2
TOTAL		174

LAOIS / OFFALY 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
TULLAMORE	CLARA	5
	DAINGEAN	2
	EDENDERRY	12
	RHODE	1
	TULLAMORE	77
	TOTAL	97
LAOIS / OFFALY TOTAL		314

Garda Remuneration

79. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the living allowance that was payable to trainee gardaí was the trainee's money or if it was public money paid from the Exchequer to fund the operation of the restaurant in Templemore College; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32675/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware the matter to which she refers is connected to the ongoing consideration by the Public Accounts Committee of the Interim Internal Audit Report concerning financial procedures in the Garda College, Templemore. As the Deputy will also be aware the Committee is expected to issue their report in the near future. The Garda Commissioner has been Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote since July 2006. Very particular responsibilities lie with Accounting Officers under the law and you will appreciate that I must be careful not to interfere either with the independent exercise of her functions as Accounting Officer by the Commissioner or the work of the Public Accounts Committee.

In relation to the living allowance, it is voted money and comes from the pay subhead in the Garda Vote. Its origins date back to the 1985 Walsh Report on Garda Recruitment and Training on foot of which the Government of the day introduced a new programme for trainee Gardaí. Under the new structure, trainee Gardaí no longer attested as members on the first day and therefore no longer received Garda salary; rather they received a personal allowance to cover their day to day expenses and a living allowance which was paid directly to the Garda College to cover their meals and accommodation while attending the College.

This payment system continues to apply to trainee Gardaí today who during Phase 1 of their training programme, which lasts 32 weeks and is based in the College, are paid a personal allowance of €184 per week with the living allowance of €77.92 per week paid directly to An Garda Síochána to cover the cost of providing meals and accommodation.

My officials in their evidence to the Committee have acknowledged that the Interim Internal Audit Report takes the view that the living allowance is public money. However, having considered the evidence given before the Committee in relation to the origins of the funding model used to finance certain activities in the Garda College, and also records identified in my Department in relation to the approval of the living allowance, legal advice has been sought from the Office of the Attorney General on the nature of the allowance: whether it was public or private funding when it was paid directly to the College. Given that the allowance is at the core of many of the issues before the Committee, clarity on this point may be of assistance in relation to the background to the development of the College funding model. My Department has suggested to the Committee that it may wish to consider the nature of the living allowance and has undertaken, if it can assist the Committee on foot of the legal advice that it has sought,

that it will do so.

Policing Authority

80. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to amend the Garda Síochána Act 2005 in order to make the Garda Commissioner accountable to the Policing Authority and to empower the authority to remove a garda commissioner from office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32753/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the Policing Authority is an independent statutory body established on 1 January 2016 to oversee the performance of An 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.

The statutory basis for the Authority is the Garda Síochána (Policing Authority and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015, which amended the Garda Síochána Act 2005. The establishment of the Policing Authority represents one of the most significant developments in policing since the founding of the State.

The Authority is tasked with overseeing the performance of the Garda Commissioner in respect of the very wide remit of all policing services, while developing a key role in the future appointment of senior Garda management and civilian staff and driving reform of the policing system and practices. Since its establishment on 1 January 2016, I believe that the Policing Authority has proven to be very effective in the performance of its functions in this regard. For example in its first year of existence, the Authority has met with the Commissioner and her senior team on 13 occasions. It has approved a three-year Strategy for An Garda Síochána. It has also determined the policing priorities for 2017 which informed the content of the 2017 Policing Plan which it also approved. In addition, it has reviewed and issued recommendations on the Garda Protected Disclosure policy and has also published a Code of Ethics that includes standards of conduct and practice for Garda members.

The Deputy will also be aware that the Report of the Joint Committee on Justice and Equality on Garda Oversight and Accountability, published in December 2016, includes a number of recommendations in relation to the statutory remit of the Authority. I want to make it clear that the Government is fully supportive of the Authority having appropriate powers so that it can carry out its oversight functions in an efficient and effective manner. However, I would draw the attention of the Deputy to the provisions of section 62O of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, which requires the Authority to prepare a report on the effectiveness of the Authority and the adequacy of the functions assigned to it by the legislation. The report can contain recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the Authority and is required to be submitted to me, as Minister, within 2 years of the establishment of the Authority. There is also a requirement for the report to be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Thus, the legislation envisages that it would be prudent for the Authority to examine, after a reasonable period of time, whether it is adequately empowered to carry out its oversight functions. In this manner, an informed decision can be taken in due course, having due regard to the views of the Authority and, of course, the Report of the Committee, as to whether additional powers would be needed by the Authority and the nature of any such powers.

Garda Data

81. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí assigned to Newbridge garda station; the number that are actually working on local as distinct from national issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33004/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 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.

The area referred to by the Deputy forms part of the Kildare Division. I have been informed by the Commissioner that the number of Gardaí assigned to this Division on the 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 329 with 21 Garda Reserves and 31 Civilians. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

This plan is progressing apace. I am informed by the Commissioner, since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, that almost 1,200 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 60 of whom were assigned to the Kildare Division. I am also informed that a further four hundred Garda recruits are scheduled to attest later this year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - an increase of 500 since the end of 2016.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Kildare Division, in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

For the Deputy's information, I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Gardaí assigned to Kildare Garda Division on 31 May 2017, the latest date for

which figures are currently available.

KILDARE DIVISION 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT:	STATION:	TOTAL
KILDARE	ATHY	29
	CASTLEDERMOT	4
	KILDARE	36
	MONASTEREVIN	5
	NEWBRIDGE	42
	RATHANGAN	3
	TOTAL:	119
LEIXLIP	CARBURY	7
	CELBRIDGE	11
	KILCOCK	9
	LEIXLIP	55
	MAYNOOTH	13
	TOTAL:	95
NAAS	CLANE	7
	KILCULLEN	2
	NAAS	104
	ROBERTSTOWN	2
	TOTAL:	115
KILDARE TOTAL:		329

Road Traffic Accidents Data

82. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his officials have been liaising with officials in the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport on the number and cost of road traffic collisions involving gardaí, including those driving on chief's permission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29955/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): While the specific matter raised by the Deputy has not featured in recent discussions, there are a number of fora in which my Department and I liaise with officials in the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport on road safety matters.

I will attend the fourth Ministerial Committee on Road Safety of 2017 with Minister Ross on 24 July, along with the Road Safety Authority, An Garda Síochána, the Attorney General and other agencies. The Committee generally meets twice a the year; however, in light of the 2016 increase in road fatalities, the Committee has already met on three occasions in 2017. The purpose of these meetings is to bring together all stakeholders to see what actions can be taken to reduce the number of road fatalities and collisions, which reached a historic low in both 2012 and 2015 but which increased again last year. The Committee also provides an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss and put forward orientations, in addition to giving feedback to other stakeholders on relevant road safety issues, and to assist in refining road safety policies and programmes.

In addition, my Department jointly chairs the Criminal Justice (Fixed Charge Processing System (FCPS)) Working Group with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. The

Working Group is charged with overseeing and facilitating the recommendations of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate's report on 'The Fixed Charge Processing System – A 21st Century Strategy' (February 2014) and the multi-agency dimension of the Group provides opportunities for discussion on a wide range of issues.

As well as the Groups detailed above, my Department is represented on a number of groups on which the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport is also represented such as the Cost of Insurance Working Group including its associated sub groups, the Third Payment Option Steering Group and the Mutual Recognition of Penalty Points (MRPP) Working Group

Independent Review Mechanism

83. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on concerns raised regarding the terms of reference of statutory inquiries established as a result of recommendations of the independent review mechanism and the need to establish further inquiries in other cases. [32692/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy is aware that the outcome of the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) included recommendations in 5 cases for the setting up of inquiries to examine issues raised in those cases. My predecessor accepted those recommendations.

On 15th May 2017, following consultation with the Office of the Attorney General and with the Policing Authority, Orders were made establishing five inquiries under section 42 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended. The terms of reference are in accordance with the recommendations and the provisions of section 42. In each case, the Order set out the issue to be inquired into, the terms of reference for the inquiry and the name of the person appointed to carry it out. It was decided that the inquiries should be conducted by retired members of the judiciary. Accordingly, five retired judges were appointed to conduct these inquiries. The inquiries have now commenced and suitable accommodation has been acquired for them. I expect that the persons appointed will be in contact with the complainants shortly.

I know that the Deputy will understand that it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on matters which are now the subject of these statutory inquiries.

With regard to the last part of the Deputy's question, the outcome of the IRM process included recommendations in five cases for the setting up of inquiries. Those recommendations were accepted, as, indeed, were the recommendations in the other IRM cases and where those recommendations included some form of follow up action by the Minister, those follow up actions have been carried out.

Garda Investigations

84. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to allegations by a whistleblower regarding political interference in the investigation into the disappearance of a person (details supplied) 40 years ago in County Donegal; his plans to commission a public inquiry into the person's disappearance and the subsequent Garda investigation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32968/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy may be aware, the Garda Commissioner requested the Serious Crime Review Team (SCRT) to exam-

ine the case in question, as a matter of priority, ensuring that all avenues of enquiry are fully explored and addressed. The Deputy will appreciate that the management of particular Garda investigations are matters in the first instance for the Garda authorities and I have no direct role in this regard. In this context it is not open to me to set a particular timeline for the work which the SCRT is undertaking.

However, I am advised by the Garda authorities that, as part of its work, the SCRT is reviewing the information collected by An Garda Síochána in relation to the case over the last 40 years and has interviewed a number of persons and examined and surveyed a number of places. I am further advised that at the conclusion of each review undertaken by the SCRT, a substantive report is provided to assist in the consideration of opportunities for further investigation.

I have asked the Garda authorities to provide me with a further update on the case when the outcome of the work being undertaken by the SCRT has been considered.

Common Travel Area

85. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of the rights of Irish and UK citizens to date in 2017, by country, further to recent statements on reciprocity of rights; and if it is the Government's position to maintain all of these rights. [30851/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Common Travel Area has been in existence since Irish independence and has its origin in the close historic relationship between Ireland and the UK. While not addressed in a discrete piece of legislation, or one formal agreement, both jurisdictions have made administrative and legal provisions over many years as necessary to give effect to its operation. Of particular note insofar as my Department's role is concerned are long-standing provisions in Irish law whereby UK nationals are not treated as 'aliens' or 'non-nationals' for the purposes of immigration law (most recently provided for in the Immigration Act 1999 and the Aliens (Amendment (no. 2) Order 1999), and as such require no special permission to enter or reside in the State. Also of note are the provisions both jurisdictions made following Ireland's exit from the Commonwealth in 1948 which facilitated the continued enjoyment of reciprocal rights and privileges for citizens of both jurisdictions. These citizens' rights include the ability of Irish and British citizens to live, work, study, access health, housing welfare, pensions and social welfare supports in each other's country, as well as certain voting rights. The specific details of such arrangements are matters for my colleagues across Government, or the UK government as applicable. Both the Irish and UK Governments have been very clear that the retention of the Common Travel Area and its associated reciprocal rights is a priority following the departure of the UK from the EU. Analysis by the Irish authorities has not identified any obvious legal barrier to the Common Travel Area being maintained bilaterally in a manner consistent with Ireland's EU obligations.

The Article 50 Negotiating Directives include welcome provisions along these lines and the Common Travel Area is specifically referenced as follows "*Existing bilateral agreements and arrangements between Ireland and the UK, such as the Common Travel Area, which are in conformity with EU law, should be recognised*".

Ireland will continue to fully uphold our EU obligations. Ireland will also advocate in the Article 50 negotiations for a strong and united EU position on safeguarding the rights of EU nationals and their family members.

Equal Opportunities Employment

86. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce legislation to allow those seeking international protection the right to work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32685/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Clearly, the Supreme Court judgment in *N.V.H. v. The Minister for Justice and Equality* is an important judgment, and its full implications are being examined carefully. The Court itself recognises the complexities around this issue in that it acknowledges the Executive function in not only controlling who should enter the State but also to regulate the activities of non-citizens while in the State and has had to consider the distinctions of rights between citizens and non-citizens in the context of Article 40.1 of the Constitution. It has concluded that in an international protection system with no temporal limit on the decision making process, an absolute prohibition on the right to work is contrary to the right to seek employment under the Constitution. The Court recognises that this is a matter for the Executive and Legislature to consider and accordingly has adjourned consideration of the Order the Court should make for a period of six months. The State will make submissions to the Court in relation to the format of the order the Court is to make at the appropriate time. In the interim, the legal status as regards access to the labour market for international protection applicants remains unchanged, as set out in Section 16(3)(b) of the International Protection Act 2015.

One of the principal aims of the International Protection Act 2015, which was commenced at the end of last year, is to process cases as quickly as possible so that in due course as cases on hand are cleared, persons in need of international protection are granted status quickly, thereby giving them an automatic right to work. In many EU Member States, the right to work is not an unfettered right, often arising after a particular period of time - usually 9 months to a year - and in many instances may be limited to particular job categories the withdrawal of other financial supports, etc. All of these matters require careful consideration as to their impact and to reflect the existing requirements placed on those who come to Ireland as lawful economic migrants.

The judgment has significant legal, economic, policy and operational considerations, many of which impact across a range of Government Departments and services. For this reason, a whole of Government approach has been adopted to examine the implications of the judgment and to propose appropriate solutions as quickly as possible. Following the approval of Government, I am establishing an inter-Departmental Taskforce with immediate effect to undertake this important work.

Garda Investigations

87. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will meet with the representatives of a family (details supplied) regarding a request by them for an inquiry into the death of a person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32971/17]

101. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to commission an inquiry into the murder of a person (details supplied) in 1970 to deal with unanswered questions with regard both the death of the person and the subsequent investigation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32967/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 87 and 101 together.

12 July 2017

I sympathise with the family of the victim in the case to which the Deputy refers. This was a brutal killing carried out in the course of a bank robbery; indeed, the crime was an attack on the State itself.

I am informed by the Garda Authorities that the Garda Serious Crime Review Team carried out a full review of this case. That review process involved a thorough examination of all available material and of the original Garda investigation into the circumstances surrounding the murder. The review also sought to identify any new or additional investigative opportunities and/or any other sources of information which may have come to light in the years since the original investigation. I am aware that family members of the victim have met and corresponded with the Serious Crime Review Team on several occasions in the course of its work on this case.

I am informed that the findings of the Serious Crime Review Team indicate that the murder was comprehensively investigated at the time and that no new evidence that might open further avenues of investigation has been presented. However, the investigators will follow up fully on any new or previously undisclosed information that might advance the investigation.

A number of persons faced prosecution in respect of this crime but none was convicted. Even at this remove in time, I urge anyone with any information that could advance the investigation to bring it immediately to the attention of An Garda Síochána.

The Deputy will wish to be aware that I am in ongoing correspondence with a family member in respect of issues raised with regard to the case and the request for an inquiry, and I will be in further correspondence directly with that family member in this matter in the near future.

Garda Data

88. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí assigned to Ballymahon Garda station, County Longford; the way in which this compares to the number that are active in the Edgeworthstown area in view of the contrasting levels of headline crimes and burglaries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32688/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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.

At Divisional level it is a matter for the Divisional Officer to determine how best to allocate personnel, so as to ensure the delivery of an effective policing service. Where a deficiency in resources is identified the matter is considered fully and addressed accordingly. As you will appreciate, in order to deliver an effective policing service, it is essential that Garda management have the flexibility to deploy Garda resources to meet operational policing needs and address critical issues as they arise. For this reason, the number of Garda available in any one Garda Station on a particular day is subject to the operational requirements of the overall Division.

Edgeworthstown Garda Station and Ballymahon Garda Station both form part of the Roscommon/Longford Division. I have been informed that the number of Gardaí assigned to the Division on the 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 303, of which 11 and 10 members were assigned to Edgeworthstown Station and Ballymahon Station respectively. There are also 9 Garda Reserves and 28 Civilians attached to the Roscom-

mon/Longford 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, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau. The Divisional Drugs Unit and Traffic Corp also carry out patrols in the areas referred to.

I am informed by the Commissioner, since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, that almost 1,200 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 5 of whom were assigned to the Roscommon/Longford Division. I am also informed that a further four hundred are scheduled to attest later this year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - an increase of 500 since the end of 2016.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across the organisation, including the Roscommon/Longford Division.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

EU Agreements

89. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the Council of Europe's anti-corruption body, GRECO's report stating that Ireland had fully implemented just three of 11 recommendations included in a 2014 evaluation report; the reason the other recommendations have not been implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32686/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): On 29 June 2017, GRECO, the Council of Europe Anti-Corruption Body published a Report on Ireland's level of compliance with the fourth Round of Mutual Evaluations theme "Corruption Prevention in respect of members of parliament, judges and prosecutors". Ireland had been evaluated in 2014 and received 11 recommendations. The compliance report which was adopted in March 2017 was disappointing and Ireland was found to have only satisfactorily implemented 3 out of 11 recommendations.

GRECO was satisfied that Ireland had implemented the one recommendation in relation to prosecutors. In relation to members of parliament, GRECO found that Ireland was partly compliant and the enactment of the Public Sector Standards Bill will ensure a much higher level of compliance going forward. My colleague the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform is progressing this Bill through the legislative process currently. In relation to the judiciary, Ireland was deemed to have implemented none of the five recommendations. Since this report was adopted, however, the Government has published both the Judicial Council Bill and the Judicial Appointments Commission Bill, and the enactment of these two Bills will substantially address these recommendations.

Ireland had been asked to report again to the Council of Europe by 31 March 2018 on the outstanding recommendations and I am committed to achieving a significantly better result next time around. With that in mind, I have established a senior officials compliance committee to work through the various recommendations and to ensure that progress continues to be made on implementing both legislative and administrative recommendations.

Very soon, I will also be publishing a Criminal Justice (Corruption Offences) Bill, which will repeal and replace the seven previous Prevention of Corruption Acts 1889 to 2010 and will introduce some additional offences. The Bill will clarify the liability of corporate bodies for corruption offences. It will extend the range of penalties available to a court when a person is convicted to include forfeiture of public office in certain circumstances. The Bill will make renewed provision for the main requirements of a number of international anti-corruption instruments which Ireland has already ratified, and it will provide for recommendations made in the course of evaluations of Ireland by the various European and International Bodies, including GRECO.

Courts Service Administration

90. **Deputy Josepha Madigan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he is taking to shorten delays in family courts (details supplied); and if he will provide statistics regarding the delays being experienced in each of the courts and the next available hearing dates for same. [32689/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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, 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 informed me that emergency applications such as protection orders and interim barring orders are prioritised. Such applications are usually granted, where the Court so decides, on the date the application is made to the Court. Therefore, there are no delays in dealing with these applications.

The Courts Service has also informed me that delays in the hearing of cases can occur for a number of reasons, many of which are outside the control of the Courts and the Courts Service, for example, the unavailability of a witness or vital evidence, delays in the furnishing of reports or because the parties and/or legal practitioners are not ready to proceed on allocated dates. This gives rise to adjournments which can have a major impact on the time taken to complete the hearing of a case and on the number of cases which can be disposed of in a court sitting.

The Deputy will be aware of the range of new legislation in the family law area introduced by the Government in 2015 and 2016 and further legislative initiatives are planned. These developments required the Courts Service to provide additional courts facilities, particularly in Dublin, for the hearing of family law and childcare applications. Overall the number of court-rooms dedicated to District Court family law in Dublin increased from 5 to 7 since October 2016 with a consequential positive impact on waiting times.

My Department is currently working on a number of legislative initiatives in the family law area. The purpose of the Domestic Violence Bill 2017 is to consolidate and reform the law on domestic violence to provide better protection for victims. The Bill is a key element of the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence and will assist in

enabling Ireland to ratify the Council of Europe's Convention on Combating Domestic Violence and Gender-based Violence (the Istanbul Convention). The Bill is currently at Committee Stage in the Seanad.

The Government is committed to significant reform of the courts, including the establishment of a family law court structure that is streamlined, more efficient, and less costly. My Department is working on the General Scheme of a Family Court Bill which will aim to streamline family law court processes, clarify jurisdictional issues and provide for a set of guiding principles to help ensure that the Family Court will operate in a user-friendly and efficient manner. The intention is to establish a dedicated Family Court within the existing court structures. The Family Court Bill will support the proposals in the Mediation Bill 2017 by encouraging greater use of alternative dispute resolution to assist in more timely resolution of family law cases.

The Department is currently engaged in further consultation with relevant stakeholders in relation to the operational aspects of a new Family Court structure. It is hoped to secure Government's approval for the General Scheme of a Family Court Bill in the coming months. Once the General Scheme has been approved by Government, it will be referred to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for drafting and will be subject to the usual pre-legislative scrutiny by the relevant Oireachtas Committee. While it is not possible at this time to indicate when the Bill will be published, it is intended that the General Scheme will be published later this year following its approval by Government.

The Courts Service has advised that waiting times in family law actions in the High Court are heard within 3 months while waiting times the Circuit Court and District Court are listed in the table, noting that waiting times for family law hearings in the District Court and Circuit Court are collated on a Court office basis rather than on an individual court basis.

Circuit Court Family Law - Waiting Times in months - June 2017

Office	Family Law	Family Law	Family Law
	Contested	Non-contested	Appeals
Carlow	Next sitting	Next sitting	Next sitting
Carrick on Shannon	6	Next sitting	Next sitting
Castlebar	Next sitting	Next sitting	Next sitting
Cavan	6	Next sitting	Next sitting
Clonmel	Next sitting	Next sitting	Next sitting
Cork	6-9	Next sitting	Next sitting
Dublin	3-5*	2 weeks	2
Dundalk	6-12	Next sitting	6-12
Ennis	6	Next sitting	6
Galway	Next sitting	Next sitting	Next sitting
Kilkenny	6	Next sitting	Next sitting
Letterkenny	6-9	Next sitting	6-9
Limerick	Next sitting	Next sitting	3-6
Longford	Next sitting	Next sitting	Next sitting
Monaghan	Next sitting	Next sitting	Next sitting
Mullingar	6	Next sitting	Next sitting
Naas	6	Next sitting	6
Portlaoise	Next sitting	Next sitting	Next sitting
Roscommon	Next sitting	Next sitting	Next sitting

Sligo	Next sitting	Next sitting	Next sitting
Tralee	Next sitting	Next sitting	Next sitting
Trim	6-9	Next sitting	3-6
Tullamore	6	Next sitting	Next sitting
Waterford	3-6	Next sitting	Next sitting
Wexford	6-12	Next sitting	3-6
Wicklow	6-9	3-6	6
* 3 months for a guaranteed priority hearing, 5 months for a possible hearing (if priority case settles or does not proceed)			

District Court Family Law - Waiting Times in weeks - June 2017

	Family Law	Family Law
Office	Domestic Violence Applications (1)	Maintenance/ Guardianship Applications (2)
Athlone	Next sitting	Next sitting
Ballina	Next sitting	Next sitting
Bray	1-3	3-6
Carlow	12	12
Carrick on Shannon	Next sitting	Next sitting
Castlebar	Next sitting	6
Cavan	Next sitting	10-12
Clonakilty	2-4	2-4
Clonmel	2-5	4-12
Cork	12	12
Donegal	Next sitting	Next sitting
Dublin	5	5
Dundalk	Next sitting	3-4
Ennis	Next sitting	4
Galway	4	4-8
Kilkenny	2-4	4-8
Letterkenny	Next sitting	13
Limerick	9	10
Longford	1	4
Loughrea	Next sitting	4
Mallow	Next sitting	Next sitting
Monaghan	Next sitting	Next sitting
Mullingar	Next sitting	4
Naas	2-4	12-14
Nenagh	2-4	11
Portlaoise	Next sitting	8-10
Roscommon	Next sitting	Next sitting
Sligo	Next sitting	Next sitting
Tralee	4	4
Trim	6-9	6-9
Tullamore	Next sitting	12

	Family Law	Family Law
Office	Domestic Violence Applications (1)	Maintenance/ Guardianship Applications (2)
Waterford	8	12
Wexford	Next sitting	6-8
Youghal	Next sitting	Next sitting

(1) Time in weeks from receipt of application to listing for hearing in domestic violence matters.

(2) Time in weeks from receipt of application to listing for hearing for other family law applications.

Garda Resources

91. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has satisfied himself that sufficient resources are available to meet the needs of the policing of County Meath. [32673/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 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.

The area referred to by the Deputy is covered by the Meath Division. I have been informed that the number of Gardaí assigned to the Meath Division on the 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 294 with 17 Garda Reserves and 27 civilians. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

This plan is progressing apace. I am informed by the Commissioner, since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, that almost 1,200 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 36 of whom were assigned to the Meath Division. I am also informed that a further four hundred are scheduled to attest later this year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - an increase of 500 since the end of 2016.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Meath Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

Assisted Decision Making

92. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 will come into force; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32683/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 provides a modern statutory framework to support decision-making by adults with capacity difficulties. The Act was signed into law on 30 December 2015.

New administrative processes and support measures, including the setting up of the Decision Support Service within the Mental Health Commission, must be put in place before the substantive provisions of the Act can be commenced. A high-level Steering Group comprised of senior officials from the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Health, the Mental Health Commission and the Courts Service is overseeing the establishment and commissioning of the Decision Support Service (DSS) and this work is ongoing.

The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 (Commencement of Certain Provisions) Order 2016 (S.I. No. 515 of 2016), brought some provisions of Part 1 (Preliminary and General) and Part 9 (Director of the Decision Support Service) of the Act into operation on 17 October 2016. These provisions were brought into operation in order to progress the setting up of the Decision Support Service and to enable the process of recruitment of the Director of the DSS to begin. The recruitment and appointment of the Director of the DSS, and the appointment of DSS staff, is a matter for the Mental Health Commission (a body under the Department of Health) with the approval of the Minister for Health.

It is intended that the key preparations will be put in place during the remainder of this year under the oversight of the Steering Group to allow for commencement orders for the remaining provisions of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 to be made when the Decision Support Service is ready to roll out the new decision-making support options. It is not possible at the moment to provide an exact time line for the finalisation of these commencement orders, not least because we will need to have the Director of the DSS in place to fully ascertain the time-line. The post of Director was advertised by the Public Appointments Service on 7 April and it is expected that the Director will be in place during the summer.

Crime Data

93. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the action being taken to address the latest concerns with regard to the recording of crime data by An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32892/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) has postponed the release of the latest Quarterly Recorded Crime Statistics, which had been due for publication on 28 June 2017. I am advised that this postponement arose because the ongoing Garda review in relation to the classification of homicide incidents is not yet complete. Therefore, it was not possible for the CSO to conduct its normal data verification process in advance of the publication of new crime statistics.

At the public meeting held with the Policing Authority on 29 June 2017 the Garda authorities indicated that there are two main aspects to the ongoing review of homicide data. The first issue under review is a consideration of how certain homicides which may have resulted from assault incidents were classified on the PULSE system. The other issue under examination relates to apparent data entry errors connected with homicides arising from offences classified as dangerous driving causing death. I am advised that, following queries raised by the CSO, An Garda Síochána have reviewed the classification of in the region of 1,400 incidents, covering the period from 2003 to 2017. I understand that the Garda authorities has now provided a revised data set to the CSO in relation to the classification of these incidents.

The Deputy will appreciate that a decision on the resumption of the publication of crime statistics is a matter for the CSO, which is the independent national statistics authority. I am advised that the Garda authorities are in continuing contact with the CSO in relation to these matters, and I expect to receive further updates on this work as it progresses.

We must bear in mind that issues with the consistent recording of crime data are not unique to this jurisdiction. The CSO has already carried out two detailed reviews of crime data quality, in 2015 and 2016, and I understand that further general reviews of crime data quality are planned. The CSO’s work provides an important measure of re-assurance to support ongoing work to enhance the quality of the official crime statistics.

In addition to the valuable work of the CSO, these matters are being kept under close scrutiny by the Policing Authority. Given the Authority’s important oversight role, I am sure the Deputy will agree that it is entirely appropriate that such issues are the subject of careful examination and inquiry by the Authority.

Garda Resources

94. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to retain and properly resource the Garda Technical Bureau as a stand alone dedicated crime investigation unit (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32690/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Garda Síochána Inspectorate Report on the management and structures in An Garda Síochána entitled ‘Changing Policing in Ireland’ was published in December 2015. One of the recommendations in the Report is that the forensic functions of the Garda Technical Bureau be divested to Forensic Science Ireland. The Deputy will be aware that the Government approved a five-year Reform and High-Level Workforce Plan for An Garda Síochána in July 2016. The Plan is aimed at implementing the agreed recommendations in ‘Changing Policing in Ireland’ including the recommendation in relation to the merging of the functions of FSI and the Technical Bureau, and at increasing the number of Gardaí and Reserves to 15,000 and 4,000 respectively, as well as doubling the

number of civilians to 4,000 by 2021.

In that context, I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a Working Group has been established with senior members of staff in both FSI and the Technical Bureau, and chaired by my Department, to prepare a plan to merge the functions of both organisations and oversee its implementation. The Working Group expects to report by the end of this year and the report will be implemented over the next two years with the intention that the new merged body will take up residence in the new FSI premises in Backweston, Co. Kildare, in late 2019.

The criminal justice system in the State has been served by FSI and the Technical Bureau to a very high standard over the years and the close and strong working relationship between An Garda Síochána and FSI is well recognised and valued on both sides. As the plan for the merger progresses, it will be an absolute priority of the Working Group that the quality standards that have been achieved by both bodies in recent years are maintained and that the new merged body will attain the same certification. In the meantime, additional staff are being recruited to both bodies to ensure that both they and the new merged body have the resources they need to provide a quality service.

UN Conventions Ratification

95. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when she plans to ratify the UNCRPD; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27657/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Finian McGrath): Ireland signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007 and since then, successive Governments have emphasised Ireland's strong commitment to proceed to ratification as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to ensure all necessary legislative and administrative requirements under the Convention are met.

It is essential that the State is in a position to meet the obligations that it assumes under the terms of an international agreement from the moment of its entry into force for Ireland. Before the State can ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, enactment of new legislation and amendment of existing legislation is required to ensure obligations will be met upon entry into force for Ireland. Ratification of a Convention before we have amended domestic legislation that contradicts it makes no sense and does nothing to ensure compliance or to protect the people for whose benefit the Convention exists. The previous Government published a Roadmap in October 2015, which sets out the legislative measures needed to meet those requirements, along with declarations and reservations to be entered by Ireland on ratification.

Considerable progress has already been made to overcome the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's ratification of the Convention. 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) Act 2017 has reformed 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.

The Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016 was published immediately prior to Christmas and completed Second Stage in February 2017. The primary purpose of the Bill is to address the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Work is ongoing on all the other issues set out in the previous Government's Roadmap for Ratification published in October 2015 and these

will be progressed as Committee Stage amendments. The Bill will be progressed to enactment at the earliest possible date by the end of this year to facilitate ratification of the UN Convention immediately thereafter.

The precise timing of ratification now depends on how long it will take for this Bill to progress through the enactment process and on issues in relation to commencement both of deprivation of liberty provisions, which will be included in the Bill at Committee Stage, and of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015.

The major issue at this stage is in relation to deprivation of liberty – in the case of persons in nursing homes for example, whose capacity to consent may be in doubt. This is a sensitive and important issue and we must get it right. Unfortunately, it is taking longer than expected to develop a proposal that is constitutionally sound and operationally effective and reasonable. The Department of Justice and Equality continues to engage with the Department of Health to assist with that work, but there is still some work to be done.

While Ireland's not having ratified the CRPD is a recurring point of criticism by the UN as well as by domestic civil society and NGOs, it should be noted that in terms of quality of service and the actual position of people with disabilities in society, Ireland is in many respects in advance of other EU states. This is not to be complacent and we are continuing to take practical measures to improve the lives of people with disabilities. The Report of the Make Work Pay Group was published in recent weeks and already action, as announced by Minister Harris has been taken on its recommendations. We have a Comprehensive Employment Strategy in place and 2017 will see positive action measures being taken to support public sector recruitment of people with disabilities. And very shortly, Government will consider the draft of the new Disability Inclusion Strategy, which I expect to see published in the coming weeks. It will contain a wide range of practical commitments to improve the position of people with disabilities.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Deputy that ratification of the UNCRPD remains a very high priority for me as Minister.

Garda Data

96. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of personnel working within a unit (details supplied); the towns they are based in; the operations that are active; the number of successes they have had to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32679/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Commissioner that Garda Drug Unit personnel are assigned on a Divisional basis and that the Garda Districts referred to by the Deputy is part of the Cavan/Monaghan Garda Division. The number of Gardaí assigned to the Cavan/Monaghan Garda Division on the 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 322, 5 of which are assigned to the Divisional Drugs Unit. There are also 12 reserves and 37 civilians attached to the Division.

I am further advised that the Divisional Officer of the Cavan/Monaghan Division commenced a review of drugs offences in the Division. The findings of this evaluation will assist in determining the appropriate Garda strategies and policing plans to disrupt, dismantle and target drug related criminality in the Division. Taking into consideration crime trends and other policing needs, including the allocation of additional resources, this information will inform local Garda management in ensuring the best possible Garda service is provided to the location communities.

During 2016 there were 35 persons arrested in the Cavan/Monaghan Garda Division in connection with 33 seizures of drugs. The locations were in Co. Cavan (Arva, Bailieboro, Ballylinagh, Ballyjamesduff, Belturbet, Cavan Town, Cloverhill and Virginia) and Co. Monaghan (Castleblayney, Clones, Monaghan Town and Newbliss). The information in relation to 2017 is not yet to hand and I have requested a further report from the Gardaí. I will forward the details to the Deputy as soon as I receive them.

Direct Provision Data

97. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the direct provision centres that are State and privately run by county, in tabular form; the cost of each State run centre in 2016; the projected cost of same in 2017; the cost to the State of each privately run centre in 2016; the projected cost of same in 2017; the number of residents in each centre on 30 Jun 2017 or the latest date available; the number of persons in each direct provision centre for one year or less, one year to two years, two to three years, three to four years, four to five years and more than five years; the corresponding figure for the same date in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33005/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): All centres, whether State-owned or privately owned are operated by commercial companies.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to details of centre location, contractor and occupancy is set out in the 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
	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

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COUNTY	CENTRE	ADDRESS	CONTRACTOR	State or privately owned
	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
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

COUNTY	CENTRE	ADDRESS	CONTRACTOR	State or privately owned
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 2014 can be found on the RIA website www.ria.gov.ie under the 'Contract Values' section of the website. This is in accordance with the Reception & Integration Agency's policy on disclosure of financial information which was agreed with the Office of the Information Commissioner. 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.

Details of the duration of stay of residents as of July 2017 in each accommodation centre and the comparative figure from May 2016 are listed in the following table. It should be noted that since May 2016, 3 direct provision accommodation centres (one each in Dublin, Carrick on Suir and Limerick) have been closed.

Duration of Stay	Up to 1 year- July 2017	Up to 1 year May 2016	1 - 2 years July 2017	1-2 years May 2016	2-3 years July 2017	2-3 Years-May 2016	3-4 Years July 2017	3-4 Years-May 2016	4-5 Years July 2017	4-5 Years-May 2016	5 years +July 2017	5 Years +May 2016	Total July 2017	Total-May 2016
Ashbourne House, Cork	27	35	29	11	8	7	3	7	3	6	5	10	75	76
Athlone-Accommodation Centre, Westmeath	67	142	96	62	42	13	8	4	1	8	18	22	232	251
Atlantic House, Waterford	33	64	27	9	19	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	81	75
Atlas House, Killarney, Kerry	18	39	24	8	12	5	4	4	5	2	5	4	68	62
Atlas House, Tralee, Kerry	38	47	21	30	16	16	13	4	1	3	2	2	91	102
Baleseskin Centre, Dublin	250	162	11	4	4	8	7	4	4	3	2	2	278	183
Birchwood House, Waterford	50	35	35	23	13	6	2	15	7	3	8	27	115	109
Carroll Village, Louth	0	2	2	6	6	4	7	10	12	6	29	41	56	69
Clonakilty Lodge, cork	32	41	32	8	7	13	4	3	2	3	6	15	83	83

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Duration of Stay	Up to 1 year- July 2017	Up to 1 year May 2016	1 - 2 years July 2017	1-2 years May 2016	2-3 years July 2017	2-3 Years-May 2016	3-4 Years July 2017	3-4 Years-May 2016	4-5 Years July 2017	4-5 Years-May 2016	5 years +July 2017	5 Years +May 2016	Total July 2017	Total-May 2016
Clondalkin Towers Centre, Dublin	29	34	38	50	47	24	28	10	6	14	61	68	209	200
Eglinton Hotel, Galway	51	64	47	58	47	12	5	6	4	10	6	53	160	203
Eyrepowell Hotel, Kildare	32	17	22	11	11	11	7	3	2	7	12	11	86	60
Georgian Court, Dublin	18	7	10	19	18	5	2	11	2	6	9	14	59	62
Glenvera Hotel, Cork	34	31	19	17	18	8	10	10	8	13	15	28	104	107
Globe House, Sligo	92	59	30	29	24	30	13	11	6	16	8	38	173	183
Great Western House, Galway	58	55	33	23	24	10	7	5	2	9	13	44	137	146
Hanratty Hotel, Limerick	23	29	28	28	21	17	13	6	3	9	9	17	97	106
Hatch Hall, Dublin	30	30	30	25	26	14	14	3	3	5	12	19	115	96
Johnston Marina Hotel, Kerry	27	34	20	17	11	3	5	0	0	2	9	17	72	73
Kinsale Road Centre, Cork	92	79	50	56	39	34	24	14	11	4	11	29	227	216
Knockalisheen Centre, Clare	66	95	70	62	48	14	17	9	13	13	23	30	237	223
Millstreet Accommodation Centre, Cork	15	82	58	56	45	42	25	17	9	10	17	23	169	230
Mosney Accommodation Centre, Meath	219	36	175	25	66	53	57	39	32	38	81	182	630	373
Mount Trenchard, Limerick	34	34	31	15	8	3	3	2	2	1	9	5	87	60
Ocean View House, Waterford	32	37	29	15	9	12	12	2	2	1	0	6	84	73
Park Lodge, Kerry	29	17	9	18	6	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	45	37
Richmond Court, Longford	27	56	40	4	8	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	77	61

Duration of Stay	Up to 1 year- July 2017	Up to 1 year May 2016	1 - 2 years July 2017	1-2 years May 2016	2-3 years July 2017	2-3 Years- May 2016	3-4 Years July 2017	3-4 Years- May 2016	4-5 Years July 2017	4-5 Years- May 2016	5 years +July 2017	5 Years +May 2016	Total July 2017	Total- May 2016
St. Patrick's Centre, Monaghan	61	76	51	27	20	15	8	11	3	9	10	27	153	165
The Montague Hotel, Laois	65	79	44	37	28	25	16	4	5	6	13	40	171	191
The Old Convent, Mayo	107	126	44	35	32	9	2	9	2	11	15	61	202	251
The Viking House, Waterford	17	27	20	16	14	8	6	7	7	2	9	11	73	71
Watergate House, Dublin	5	3	7	0	1	3	2	5	6	3	23	35	44	49
Total	1678	1674	1182	804	698	426	326	236	164	223	442	883	4490	4246

The totals shown above mask a considerable churn in the figures in the period in question. For example in 2016 alone, 1,960 persons left State provided accommodation and 1,685 persons took up the offer of State provided accommodation having made an application for international protection.

It should be further noted that the number of persons in State provided accommodation for more than five years continued to fall from 883 in May of 2016 to 442 in July of 2017. This is further evidence of the increased processing of applications by the International Protection Office and the International Protection Appeals Tribunal.

Additional comprehensive statistics in relation to the services provided by the Reception and Integration Agency are available on www.ria.gov.ie.

Migrant Integration

98. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the funding invested in community integration programmes per constituency for each of the past three years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33007/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The following table sets out the total funds invested in community migrant integration programmes by location and organisation/project for the past three years 2017, 2016 and 2015, including amounts committed in 2017 that will be disbursed in subsequent years. While the location of each funded organisation/project is provided, it is not possible to break this down further by constituency as the relevant data is not held in this way, and numerous funded projects are delivered on a regional or nationwide basis.

There are currently 14 projects approved under the National Funding Programme to promote the integration of migrants. Project objectives include: increasing mutual understanding between the host community and migrants; combating racism and xenophobia; undertaking research on interculturalism; and promoting the integration of migrants into Irish society, particularly vulnerable or socially-excluded migrants.

The Communities Integration Fund will fund 131 initiatives in 2017 by community organi-

sations to promote integration in their local communities. The aim is to support communities across Ireland to play a greater role in promoting integration by providing practical support to facilitate social inclusion among the migrant population.

There are a total of 20 projects receiving funding through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and 5 projects through the ESF Integration and Employment of Migrants (IEM) funding.

Key to Fund Names:

CIF: Community Integration Fund

AMIF: Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

NFPPII: National Funding to Promote Integration of Immigrants

IEM: Integration and Employment of Migrants, (European Social Fund Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning)

ERF: European Refugee Fund

Funding Paid in 2017

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount €
Funding Paid in 2017			
AMIF	Clare	Clare Immigrant Support Centre Ltd	54000
AMIF	Cork	NASC	60000
AMIF	Dublin Area	Crosscare	74694.30
AMIF	Dublin Area	Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Ltd.	53986.20
AMIF	Dublin Inner City	National College of Ireland	45000
IEM	Dublin Area	Business in the Community	577500
NFPPII	Dublin Area	Business in the Community	66976
NFPPII	Dublin Area	Localise Youth & Community Services	10833
AMIF	Galway	Galway City Partnership	60300
AMIF	Kerry, Killarney & Tralee	KASI	54000
IEM	Kilkenny City and County	County Kilkenny Leadership Partnership	107205
AMIF	Laois	Laois Partnership Company	45000
AMIF	Limerick & Clare	Kilmallock Performing Centre	50625
AMIF	Limerick and mid-west region	Doras Luimní	70273.50

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount €
Funding Paid in 2017			
AMIF	Limerick City	Mary Immaculate College	90000
AMIF	Mayo	South West Mayo Development Company	79744.20
IEM	Meath	Cultúr Celebrating Diversity Ltd	98713.50
NFPPII	Meath	Meath County Council	22000
AMIF	Nationwide	Football Association of Ireland	45021.83
AMIF	Nationwide	Irish Refugee Council	90000
AMIF	Nationwide	Spirasi	225000
AMIF	Nationwide	Irish Traveller Movement	45122.85
AMIF	Nationwide	Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland	75000
AMIF	Nationwide	Immigrant Council of Ireland	45000
IEM	Nationwide	New Communities Partnership	98713.50
IEM	Nationwide	Seetec	105000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Third Age Foundation Ltd.	21000
NFPPII	Nationwide	New Communities Partnership	22,027.49
AMIF	South-East Region	Edmund Rice	45000
			Funding Paid in 2016
NFPPII	Dublin 12	The Caterers	1339.39
NFPPII	Dublin City	Dublin City Council	77000
NFPPII	Dublin Area	Business in the Community	516000
NFPPII	Dublin Area	Localise Youth & Community Services	64886
NFPPII	Dublin South	South Dublin County Council	146130.28
NFPPII	Meath	Meath County Council	76780.98
NFPPII	Nationwide	Holocaust Educational Trust	50000
NFPPII	Nationwide	National HSE Community Games	34998

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Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount €
Funding Paid in 2017			
NFPPII	Nationwide	New Communities Partnership	124932
NFPPII	Nationwide	Sports Against Racism Ireland	10000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Third Age Foundation Ltd.	105000
NFPPII	Nationwide	UNHCR	5000.75
NFPPII	Wicklow, Arklow	Polish Irish Educational	18000
			Funding Paid in 2015
ERF	Carlow	St Catherine's Community Services Centre	36382
NFPPII	Cork	Igbo Union Cork	3000
NFPPII	Dublin Area	New Dubliners and the City Conference	684
NFPPII	Dublin City	Dublin City Council	89200
ERF	Dublin Area	City of Dublin Education & Training Board (CDET B)	35860
ERF	Dublin Area	BeLonG To Youth Services Ltd.	18343
ERF	Dublin Area	Dublin Rape Crisis Centre	21938
NFPPII	Dublin Area	Localise	32613
NFPPII	Dublin, Fingal	Fingal County Council	40500
NFPPII	Dublin Area	Business in the Community	389230
NFPPII	Dublin South	South Dublin Council	53600
ERF	Kerry	KASI Ltd	41868
ERF	Mayo	Mayo Intercultural Action Limited	35585
NFPPII	Meath	Meath County Council	32660
NFPPII	Nationwide	HSE Community Games	17499
NFPPII	Nationwide	Football Association of Ireland (Polska Éire)	20000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Third Age Foundation	47000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Show Racism the Red Card	50000

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount €
Funding Paid in 2017			
NFPPII	Nationwide	Holocaust Education Trust Ireland	70000
NFPPII	Nationwide	New Communities Partnership Citizenship Application Support Service (CASS)	35572
NFPPII	Nationwide	UNHCR	5000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Sports Against Racism Ireland	10000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Yellow Flag Intercultural Schools Programme	25544
NFPPII	Nationwide	Polska Éire	3355
NFPPII	Nationwide	Youth Work Ireland	1449

Funding committed for the remainder of 2017

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount Awarded €
Funding committed for the remainder of 2017			
CIF	Carlow, Askea	Equal Chances Polish School	2200
CIF	Cavan, Cavan Town	Cavan Congolese Community Forum	3840
CIF	Clare, Inis Díomháin	Ballyea Community Group	5000
CIF	Clare, Ennis	Ennis Street Arts Festival	5000
CIF	Cork, Ballincollig	Ballincollig Family Resource Centre	1000
CIF	Cork, Bantry	Bantry YMCA	2050
CIF	Cork, Military Hill	Brij (with Wallaroo Playschool)	5000
CIF	Cork, Glanmire	Brooklodge Table Tennis Club	600
CIF	Cork, Carrigtohill	Carrigtohill Family Resource Centre	4700
CIF	West Cork	Clonakilty Community Arts Centre	2930
CIF	Cork, Clonakilty	Clonakilty Friends of Asylum Seekers	5000
CIF	Cork City	Cork YMCA	5000
CIF	Cork, Kinsale Road	Kinsale Road Accommodation Centre	5000
CIF	Cork, Rathcoole	Love and Care for People	4800

Questions - Written Answers

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount Awarded €
Funding committed for the remainder of 2017			
CIF	Cork City	Meitheal Mara	4370
CIF	Cork, Passage West	Passage West Spraoí for Syria	4830
CIF	Cork, Midleton	SECAD - Midleton/Macroon	5000
CIF	Cork, University College Cork	The Glucksman - UCC	4500
CIF	Cork City	Together - Razem Centre	500
NFP11	Cork & South Region	NASC	22500
CIF	Donegal Town	Donegal Bay Rowing Club	2800
CIF	Donegal Town	Donegal Family Resource Centre	1400
CIF	Donegal, Letterkenny	Donegal Youth Services	5000
CIF	Dublin, Balbriggan	Balbriggan Community Council	3300
CIF	Dublin, Balbriggan	Balbriggan Cricket Club	3320
CIF	Dublin, Balbriggan	Balbriggan Tourism	5000
CIF	Dublin, Balbriggan	Foroige-Balbriggan Youth Service	5000
CIF	Dublin, Balbriggan	Irish Vikings Club	5000
CIF	Dublin, Balbriggan	Musicantia Ltd	5000
CIF	Dublin 1	ACET Ireland	5000
CIF	Dublin 1	Akidwa	5000
CIF	Dublin 13	Baldoyle United	5000
CIF	Dublin 9	Belvedere Football Club	2800
CIF	Dublin 1	Cairde	5000
CIF	Dublin 13	Clare Hall Resident's Association	4500
CIF	Dublin 1	Discovery Gospel Choir	4900
CIF	Dublin 1	Dublin City Inter Faith Forum	5000
CIF	Dublin 17	Moatview Early Education Centre	2278
CIF	Dublin 1	Neighbourhood Youth Project 2	3500
CIF	Dublin 1	O'Connell Secondary School	5000

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount Awarded €
Funding committed for the remainder of 2017			
CIF	Dublin 1	Outhouse LGBT Community & Resource Centre	4000
CIF	Dublin 1	Polish Peace Corps	3340
CIF	Dublin 1	Praise Tabernacle	5000
CIF	Dublin 7	SEN Polish Complementary School	3280
CIF	Dublin 1	Sport Against Racism Ireland	5000
CIF	Dublin 5	Artane Coolock Family Resource Centre	4395
CIF	Dublin 7	Welcome Café	5000
CIF	Dublin 3	Young People At Risk (YPAR)	4800
CIF	Dublin 1	Blue Fire	5000
CIF	Dublin 2	AMAL Women's Organisation	5000
CIF	Dublin 8	Capital Strength Weighlifting Club	4992
CIF	Dublin 2	ENAR Ireland	5000
CIF	Dublin 2	Irish Refugee Council	5000
CIF	Dublin 8	LIR Anti Racism Training & Education Programme	3300
CIF	Dublin 2	Literature Ireland, TCD	4950
CIF	Dublin 8	Outlandish Theatre Platform	4950
CIF	Dublin 8	Rialto Community Radio	5000
CIF	Dublin 8	Street Feast, Rialto	5000
CIF	Dublin 2	The Ark Children's Cultural Centre	5000
CIF	Dublin 4	Railway Union Cricket Club	4840
CIF	Dublin 24	An Cosán, Tallaght	5000
CIF	Dublin 24	Tallaght Community Arts	4850
CIF	Dublin 15	Failte Isteach, Tyrellstown	3000
CIF	Dublin 15	Hartstown Hunstown FC	5000

Questions - Written Answers

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount Awarded €
Funding committed for the remainder of 2017			
CIF	Dublin 15	i-Smile International, Mulhuddart	5000
CIF	Dublin 15	Mulhuddart Community Centre	2000
CIF	Dublin 15	Rekindle Talent, Ladyswell	4670
CIF	Dublin 22	South Dublin County Partnership, Clondalkin	2280
CIF	Dublin 15	Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní), Blanchardstown	5000
CIF	Dublin 15	Tyrellstown Cricket Club	1500
CIF	Dublin 15	Tyrellstown Resident's Association	3240
CIF	Dublin 15	Tyrellstown Social Club (Women's Group)	3150
CIF	Dublin 15	Verona Sports & Leisure Club, Clonsilla	4220
CIF	Dublin 15	West Dublin Rhinos American Football, Lucan	4760
CIF	Dublin 15	Pinoy Badminton Association Ireland	5000
AMIF	Dublin South	South Dublin County Partnership	45000
NFPPII	Dublin Area	The Lantern Intercultural Centre	12000
NFPPII	Dublin Area	Business in the Community	45000
NFPPII	Dublin Area	Mendicity Institution	67500
NFPPII	Dublin Area	Localise Youth & Community Service	90000
NFPPII	Dublin, Fingal	Fingal County Council	25000
CIF	Galway, Doughiska Rd	Ard Family Resource Centre	5000
CIF	Galway, Athenry	Bia Lover	5000
CIF	Galway, Athenry	Foróige Athenry Adolescent Project	4520
CIF	Galway, Athenry	Monivea Fair Committee	1350
CIF	Galway, Mill Street	Croí na Gaillimhe Resource Centre	3900

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount Awarded €
Funding committed for the remainder of 2017			
CIF	Galway, Ragoon	Pernet Company Ltd	4950
CIF	Galway, Ragoon	Ragoon Family Centre	5000
CIF	Galway, Newcastle Rd	Scoil Chroi Iosa	2590
CIF	Galway, Claddagh	St Nicholas National School	4800
CIF	Galway City	The Irish Workhouse Centre	1000
CIF	Galway City	Youth Work Ireland Galway	2805
CIF	West Kerry	Kerry Diocesan Youth Services	1990
CIF	Kerry, Tralee	Kerry Youth Dance Theatre	5000
NFPPII	Kerry, Tralee	Tralee International Resource Centre	30000
CIF	Kildare, Kilcock	Kilcock GAA Club	1500
CIF	Kildare, Leixlip	Le Cheile Athletic Club	4800
CIF	Kildare, Monasterevin	Monasterevin Youth Action	2850
CIF	Kilkenny	Kilkenny Integration Forum	2000
CIF	Kilkenny, Higginstown	Polska/Eire Kilkenny Integration	5000
CIF	Laois, Portlaois	Laois Sports Partnership	5000
CIF	Laois, Portlaois	Portlaois Family Resource Centre	4750
CIF	Leitrim, Carrick-on-Shannon	The Leitrim Design House	4950
CIF	Limerick	Limerick Youth Service	5000
CIF	Limerick City	Northstar Family Support Project	5000
CIF	Longford, Farneyhoogan	Backstage Theatre	5000
CIF	Louth, Drogheda	Culture Connect	5000
CIF	Louth, Ardee	Dee Hub	5000
CIF	Louth, Drogheda	Drogheda Homeless Aid	2310
CIF	Mayo, Ballaghaderreen	Ballaghaderreen GAA Club	5000

Questions - Written Answers

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount Awarded €
Funding committed for the remainder of 2017			
CIF	Mayo, Ballyhaunis	Ballyhaunis GAA Club	5000
CIF	Mayo, Ballyhaunis	Ballyhaunis Parent and Toddler Group	300
CIF	Mayo, Castlebar	Green Campus GMT	5000
CIF	Meath, Navan	African Women's Development Initiative	4365
CIF	Monaghan, Drum-barnet	Border Bounce Gymnastics Club	5000
CIF	Monaghan	Teach Na nDanine Family Resource Centre	3000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Marino Institute of Education	30000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Sports Against Racism Ireland	27000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Show Racism the Red Card	100000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Third Age Foundation Ltd.	90000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Dublin City University	39000
NFPPII	Nationwide	New Communities Partnership	35100
CIF	Offaly, Tullamore	Offaly Sports Partnership	5000
CIF	Offaly, Tullamore	Youthwork Ireland, Midlands	2775
CIF	Roscommon, Castle-more	Ballaghaderreen Community Games	2000
CIF	Roscommon, Ballaghaderreen	Ballaghaderreen Golf Club	4883
CIF	Roscommon, Ballaghaderreen	Failte Isteach	1200
CIF	Roscommon, Ballaghaderreen	Friends of Fairgreen	5000
CIF	Roscommon, Castlereagh	Roscommon Women's Network	5000
CIF	Sligo	Sligo Family Resource Centre	5000
CIF	Sligo, Strand Hill Rd	Sligo Global Kitchen	5000
CIF	Tipperary, Thurles	Old School Community Centre	1800

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount Awarded €
Funding committed for the remainder of 2017			
CIF	Tipperary, Roscrea	Roscrea Heritage Centre	3700
CIF	Tipperary, Thurles	Slieveardagh United F.C	500
CIF	Tipperary, Thurles	The Commons Community Playschool	1000
CIF	Tipperary, Clogheen	Vee Rovers Club	1720
CIF	Tipperary, Thurles	Youth Work Ireland Tipperary	3531
CIF	Waterford, Dungarvan	Déise Refugee Response	5000
CIF	Waterford, Poleberry	Erin's Own/ Sacred Heart GAA	2000
CIF	Waterford, Dungarvan	Fáilte Isteach	2080
CIF	Waterford, The Folly	Sacred Heart Parish	500
CIF	Westmeath, Athlone	Athlone Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Group	2180
CIF	Westmeath, Mullingar	Westmeath Sports Partnership	5000
CIF	Wexford	Faythe Harriers Hurling and Camogie Club	5000
NFPPII	Wexford	South East Community Training & Education Centre	15000
CIF	Wicklow, Port Road	Children & Young People's Services Committee	5000

Table ctg.

Funding committed for 2018-2020

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount Awarded €
Funding Committed for 2018-2020			
AMIF	Clare	Clare Immigrant Support Centre Ltd	126000
AMIF	Cork	NASC	140000
NFPPII	Cork & South Region	NASC	52500
AMIF	Dublin Area	Crosscare	174286.2
AMIF	Dublin Area	Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Ltd.	125967.44
AMIF	Dublin Inner City	National College of Ireland	105000

Questions - Written Answers

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount Awarded €
Funding Committed for 2018-2020			
AMIF	Dublin South	South Dublin County Partnership	105000
IEM	Dublin Area	Business in the Community	1347500
NFPPII	Dublin Area	Business in the Community	105000
NFPPII	Dublin Area	Mendicity Institution	157500
NFPPII	Dublin Area	Localise Youth & Community Service	210000
NFPPII	Dublin, Fingal	Fingal County Council	25000
AMIF	Galway	Galway City Partnership	80400
AMIF	Kerry, Killarney & Tralee	KASI	126000
NFPPII	Kerry, Tralee	Tralee International Resource Centre	70000
IEM	Kilkenny City and County	County Kilkenny Leadership Partnership	357350
AMIF	Laois	Laois Partnership Company	105000
AMIF	Limerick & Clare	Kilmallock Performing Centre	118125
AMIF	Limerick and mid-west region	Doras Luimní	163971.5
AMIF	Limerick City	Mary Immaculate College	210000
AMIF	Mayo	South West Mayo Development Company	186069.8
IEM	Meath	Cultúr Celebrating Diversity Ltd	228972.1
AMIF	Nationwide	Football Association of Ireland	105050.92
AMIF	Nationwide	Irish Refugee Council	210000
AMIF	Nationwide	Spirasi	525000
AMIF	Nationwide	Irish Traveller Movement	105286.7
AMIF	Nationwide	Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland	175000
AMIF	Nationwide	Immigrant Council of Ireland	105000
IEM	Nationwide	New Communities Partnership	230331.5

Fund	Location	Organisation/Project	Amount Awarded €
Funding Committed for 2018-2020			
IEM	Nationwide	Seetec	245000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Marino Institute of Education	70000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Sports Against Racism Ireland	63000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Third Age Foundation Ltd.	210000
NFPPII	Nationwide	Dublin City University	91000
NFPPII	Nationwide	New Communities Partnership	81900
AMIF	South-East Region	Edmund Rice	105000
NFPPII	Wexford	South East Community Training & Education Centre	15000

Garda Stations

99. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a final report on the reopening of six Garda stations has been received from the Garda Commissioner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32893/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources available to An Garda Síochána and I, as Minister, have no role in the matter.

Under the Programme for a Partnership Government, the Government is committed to launching a pilot scheme to reopen 6 Garda stations, both urban and rural, to determine possible positive impacts that such openings will have on criminal activity, with special emphasis on burglaries, theft and public order. At its meeting on 13 June 2017, the Government noted the Garda Commissioner’s interim Report which analysed population and crime trends and, taking account of the availability of stations for reuse, makes a number of recommendations including that Stepside Station in Co. Dublin be reopened on a pilot basis.

The Report also indicates that the Commissioner is likely, subject to further analysis, to recommend the reopening of Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow and Donard, Co. Wicklow in her final report. If a second station is to be reopened in Dublin, the Commissioner has indicated that, subject to further analysis, the former station at Rush, Co. Dublin will be recommended for reopening.

The Government has, accordingly, agreed in principle to the reopening of Stepside Garda Station on a pilot basis as soon as any necessary preparatory works have been completed. Following any decision to reopen the former stations, the Garda authorities will work closely with the Office of Public Works in relation to any necessary preparatory works required to progress the reopenings.

The final report of the Commissioner in relation to Rush, Leighlinbridge and Donard stations is expected to be received in the near future and it will be brought to Government thereafter.

Equal Opportunities Employment

100. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will review applications for asylum, refugee status and long term residency status in respect of persons that have been awaiting a decision for more than four years with particular reference to the need to grant stamp 4 status to enable such persons seek employment and become self sufficient; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32965/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I assume the Deputy is referring to persons in the international protection process.

Clearly, the Supreme Court judgment in *N.V.H. v. The Minister for Justice and Equality* is an important judgment, and its full implications are being examined carefully. The Court itself recognises the complexities around this issue in that it acknowledges the Executive function in not only controlling who should enter the State but also to regulate the activities of non-citizens while in the State and has had to consider the distinctions of rights between citizens and non-citizens in the context of Article 40.1 of the Constitution. It has concluded that in an international protection system with no temporal limit on the decision making process, an absolute prohibition on the right to work is contrary to the right to seek employment under the Constitution. The Court recognises that this is a matter for the Executive and Legislature to consider and accordingly has adjourned consideration of the Order the Court should make for a period of six months. The State will make submissions to the Court in relation to the format of the order the Court is to make at the appropriate time. In the interim, the legal status as regards access to the labour market for international protection applicants remains unchanged, as set out in Section 16(3)(b) of the International Protection Act 2015.

One of the principal aims of the International Protection Act 2015, which was commenced at the end of last year, is to process cases as quickly as possible so that, in due course as cases on hand are cleared, persons in need of international protection are granted status quickly, thereby giving them an automatic right to work. As the Deputy will be aware, all applications for International Protection are examined individually and are decided on their own merits.

The judgment has significant legal, economic, policy and operational considerations, many of which impact across a range of Government Departments and services. For this reason, a whole of Government approach has been adopted to examine all of the implications of the judgment and to propose appropriate solutions as quickly as possible. Following the approval of Government, I am establishing an inter-Departmental Taskforce with immediate effect to undertake this important work.

Question No. 101 answered with Question No. 87.

Road Safety

102. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the review he is undertaking of road safety legislation, enforcement and implementation since taking over the portfolio of justice; his priorities for road safety invigilation and enforcement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32678/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, any review of road safety legislation is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Mr. Shane Ross, T.D.. Road safety legislation currently in train in Minister Ross' Department includes the Road Traffic (Drink Driving - Fixed Penalty Notice)

Bill 2017, the commencement of Parts 2 and 7 of the Road Traffic Act 2017, the National Vehicle and Driver File (Prüm Decisions) Bill 2017 and the Road Safety Authority (Amendment) Bill 2017.

Road safety is a shared responsibility, one which I, Minister Ross and the Government, take very seriously. Ireland's current Road Safety Strategy (2013 – 2020) aims to place Ireland consistently on the list of safest countries in the EU and beyond. To achieve this, we are continuing to work together in partnership. I will attend the fourth Ministerial Committee on Road Safety of 2017 with Minister Ross on 24 July, along with the Road Safety Authority, An Garda Síochána, the Attorney General and other agencies. This Committee oversees the implementation of the Road Safety Strategy and provides a forum for high-level discussion of road safety issues.

The Committee generally meets twice a the year; however, in light of the 2016 increase in road fatalities, the Committee has already met on three occasions in 2017. The purpose of these meetings is to bring together all stakeholders to see what actions can be taken to reduce the number of road fatalities and collisions, which reached a historic low in both 2012 and 2015 but which increased again last year. In this regard, it should be pointed out that, so far this year, there has been a small reduction in the overall number of road deaths compared to the same period in 2016, although there is no room for complacency here. Any death on our roads is a death too many.

In addition, my Department jointly chairs the multi-agency Criminal Justice (FCPS) Working Group with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. The Working Group is charged with overseeing and facilitating the recommendations of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate's report on 'The Fixed Charge Processing System – A 21st Century Strategy' (February 2014). Some 22 of the 37 recommendations have been fully implemented to date, with 5 additional recommendations on track for delivery in 2017. Work on the remaining recommendations is ongoing and the majority of these recommendations are medium-long-term in nature.

This multi-agency approach continues into enforcement. An Garda Síochána's Roads Policing Operations Plan 2017 incorporates a programme of high visibility road safety and enforcement operations, carried out in partnership with other state agencies. Garda operations specifically target road use behaviour known to contribute significantly to collisions, including driving while intoxicated, speeding and the use of mobile phones. By working together with the Road Safety Authority and other agencies, An Garda Síochána will continue to confront dangerous road-user behaviour thorough public presence, legislative enforcement, education and partnership.

In January 2017, the Commissioner indicated that there will be an additional 10% increase in the traffic corps during the course of 2017, and I am informed that An Garda Síochána that a proposal in respect of the reconfiguration of the Traffic Corps is currently being developed. An Garda Síochána will liaise with the Policing Authority in respect of the reconfiguration. It is anticipated that the reconfiguration will be completed before the end of 2017. An Garda Síochána also indicated that it was intended to have a stronger focus on road traffic enforcement in the training provided to new recruits at Templemore.

The Deputy will appreciate that I have no direct role in the enforcement of road traffic legislation, which is an operational matter for the Garda Commissioner. I am informed that road traffic legislation is enforced as part of the day-to-day duties of members of An Garda Síochána, as well as through a programme of high visibility road safety and enforcement operations, carried out in partnership with other state agencies. Garda operations specifically target road use behaviour known to contribute significantly to collisions, including use of a mobile phone. Both strategic, targeted operations and general methods of enforcement have a valuable role to play

in An Garda Síochána's road traffic 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) sets out key strategic objectives for Road Policing which will inform and guide An Garda Síochána's Road Policing plans over the next 5 years. Under the Programme, the Commissioner will undertake a number of road safety traffic enforcement initiatives, including expanding the use of technology and increasing checkpoints.

The Programme is being supported by significant Government investment of some €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure over the period 2016 to 2021. This major investment will allow An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in the fight against crime.

Underpinning all of these measures is the Government's ongoing commitment 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. The Government plans 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. This year, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan which is in train within An Garda Síochána. Approximately 300 appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve.

Commercial Rates

103. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the issue of commercial rates being applied to private child care centres will be reviewed by his Department with a view to excluding them on the same basis as community child care centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32680/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I should point out that the Commissioner of Valuation is independent in the exercise of his duties under the Valuation Acts 2001- 2015 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. 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 on 8 June 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.

Currently, there are a number of avenues of redress for an occupier of rateable property who is dissatisfied with a determination of valuation made under the provisions of the Valuation Acts, 2001-2015. Firstly, before a determination is made, there is a right to make representations to the Valuation Office in relation to a proposed valuation. Later in the process, if the occupier is still dissatisfied with the determination, there is a right of appeal to the Valuation Tribunal which is an independent body set up for the purpose of hearing appeals against determinations of the Valuation Office. Finally, there is a right of appeal to the Higher Courts on a point of law.

Private childcare facilities which are operated for profit form part of the rateable valuation base on a nationwide basis. There are no plans at this time to provide for special treatment of these facilities by their exemption from rateability under the Valuation Acts as such a change would be quickly followed by demands for similar treatment from other interests involved in the provision of other services. 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.

Policing Issues

104. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he will take in the Border region to address the impact of a hard border and the potential increase of criminal activity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32513/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): It has always been the case that Ireland and the United Kingdom cooperate closely on immigration and border 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.

There is close and ongoing cooperation between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI on all aspects of policing, with a particular focus on combatting security threats and tackling cross-border crime. The Garda Commissioner and the Chief Constable of the PSNI, who are responsible for operational policing cooperation, have repeatedly emphasised the scope and the value of the close and high quality cooperation between the two police services which is instrumental in combating crime, protecting community safety and, indeed, saving lives. The two police services operate a joint Cross-Border Policing Strategy which has as its aims to improve public safety throughout Ireland, to disrupt criminal activity and to enhance the policing capability of both police services on the island.

It is the firm intention that in the context of the UK's departure from the European Union there will be no diminution in the level of co-operation in this regard, and every effort will continue to be made to achieve that outcome.

Immigration Policy

105. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if Ireland is playing its part with taking in a proportionate number of immigrants. [32471/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, this Question was part-transferred to my Department and relates to the current migratory pressures being experienced by the Italian authorities.

Irregular migration flows along the Central Mediterranean Route remain substantial, and have seen a significant increase of more than a third over the first six months of this year when compared to the same period last year. A recent European Commission proposal on measures to support Italy is being discussed at EU level this week and aims to improve the situation in the short term. In the long term, to better manage migratory flows and the return of irregular migrants the European Union and its Member States must work closely with third countries to address the root causes of irregular migration.

Through the EU's external migration policy, the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, and in particular the Partnership Framework and the Malta Declaration, the EU is supporting longer-term strategies to develop economic and political stabilisation in third countries of origin and transit, and in neighbouring third countries.

In June 2016 the EU adopted a Partnership Framework with five priority third countries (Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal). The first step has been to establish and build on working relationships with these third countries with a view to establishing more concrete Migration Compacts. The European External Action Service and Commission are continuing to engage with these priority countries and firmly bed down the concept in the context of the many challenges faced by Italy, while looking to expand the partnership to other third countries.

The Trust Fund for Africa is an important tool with which the EU can encourage third countries to work with Member States on issues such as returns and repatriation, as well as on the issuing of travel documents to nationals from these third countries awaiting return. The Trust Fund has already seen tangible results with three programmes in Libya that support the emergency needs of protection and assistance of migrants and refugees in the country, and projects supporting enhanced security and border management in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Ireland has, to-date, contributed €3 million to the Trust Fund.

A small proportion of the migrants arriving in Italy are eligible for relocation to other EU Member States as asylum-seekers. Ireland is operating the Irish Refugee Protection Pro-

gramme (IRPP), which includes the relocation to Ireland of asylum-seekers from Greece and Italy. Under the IRPP, Ireland is on target to meet in full its commitment to Greece. However, as explained in responses to previous Parliamentary Questions, Italy, unlike Greece, will not permit security assessments to be undertaken by other States on its territory. Accordingly, Ireland has been unable to undertake security assessments of the asylum seeker cohort eligible for relocation to Ireland and no relocations from Italy have therefore taken place, despite Ireland's readiness to commence relocations as soon as this issue can be resolved. Intensive efforts have been ongoing to resolve this, both bilaterally with Italian counterparts at official, diplomatic and Ministerial level, and at EU level, including through the European Commission.

Brexit Issues

106. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; and the publication date of these plans. [33346/17]

The Taoiseach: Following on from publication of the document setting out the Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations, work is underway across departments to prepare adaptive Sectoral Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders and will encompass the following themes:

- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;

- Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;

- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;

- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;

- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

All of this work is ongoing and must also respond to the emerging developments in the Brexit negotiations. There is no decision as yet on publication dates.

National Economic and Social Council

107. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach the membership of the National Economic and Social Council; the vacancies on the council; and when he expects to fill those vacancies. [33521/17]

The Taoiseach: Appointments to the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) are in accordance with the provisions of the National Economic and Social Development Office Act 2006, and the National Economic and Social Council (Alteration of Composition) Order 2010 - SI 603/2010.

The legislation provides for nominations from five sectors - business and employer, ICTU, farming and agricultural, community and voluntary, environmental; public servants; and inde-

pendent members.

The members are:

Business and Employer

Maeve McElwee, IBEC

Tom Parlon, CIF

Ian Talbot, Chambers Ireland

ICTU

Patricia King, ICTU

Tom Geraghty, PSEU

Shay Cody, IMPACT

Farming and Agricultural

to be confirmed

Community and Voluntary

Sean Healy, Social Justice Ireland

Brid O'Brien, INOU

James Doorley, NYCI

Environmental

Kate Ruddock, Friends of the Earth

Oonagh Duggan, Birdwatch Ireland

Michael Ewing, Irish Environmental Network

Public Servants

Martin Fraser, Secretary General, D/Taoiseach (Chair)

Elizabeth Canavan, Assistant Secretary General, D/Taoiseach (Deputy Chair)

Derek Moran, Secretary General, D/Finance

Robert Watt, Secretary General, D/Public Expenditure and Reform

Orlaigh Quinn, Secretary General, D/Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

John McCarthy, Secretary General, D/Housing, Planning and Local Government

Independent Experts

Edgar Morgenroth, ESRI

Michelle Norris, UCD

Philip Hamell, Department of the Taoiseach.

I will appoint the farming and agricultural members when I have the nominations from that sector. Other independent category appointments will follow the process of the *Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards*.

Trade Agreements

108. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which new trading links continue to be established globally; the extent to which it is expected that Ireland can benefit from such developments in the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33506/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): New trading links continue to be established globally at a fast pace. In recent years, technological innovation, the digitization of trade and geopolitical changes have all impacted on how the world trades. While the global economic environment has always been dynamic, it could be argued that change is happening at a faster pace than ever before.

The EU's suite of Free Trade Agreements with third countries is helping to open new markets, break down trade barriers and create new opportunities for Irish firms. There are currently some twenty EU trade deals at different stages of negotiation. These Agreements are particularly important to SMES to enable them to internationalise and grow exports.

Ireland, as one of the world's most open, export-based economies, relies on continued open access to international markets for our economic growth. The combination of export-led growth and foreign direct investment has transformed the Irish economy over recent decades. The more we trade, the more jobs we support and the better our living standards.

The outstanding successes of our trade policy to date are evident. Exports are at a record high of an estimated €240 billion this year. Foreign Direct investment is also at a record high. IDA companies created nearly 19,000 new jobs in 2016 across a range of sectors, with every region of Ireland benefitting. Overall, unemployment is now down to 6.3%.

In March, the Government launched 'Ireland Connected, Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World'. This is a cohesive, whole-of-government Strategy, which sets out ambitious targets for Ireland's exports, foreign direct investment, tourism and international education. The Strategy details Ireland's response to the current highly dynamic global environment, and how we will meet these challenges.

As part of the Strategy, we aim to increase our indigenous exports by Enterprise Ireland supported companies, including food, to reach €26 billion by 2020. Over the same period, we aim to secure 900 new foreign direct investments. We will also support geographic market diversification, so that Irish owned exports to non-UK markets increase by 50%, while maintaining exports of at least €7.5 billion to the UK. These targets reaffirm that we are an outward-looking country, strongly committed to international trade and to adapting to the changing international environment, including the challenges and opportunities presented by Brexit.

Foreign Direct Investment

109. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to provide serviced and zoned industrial land suitable for foreign direct investment in Sligo (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33127/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I understand the importance of the availability of suitable properties in attracting foreign direct investment to Ireland, including to County Sligo.

I am informed that IDA Ireland has eight hectares of available land at its Finisklin Business and Technology Park and that the Agency continues to bring this property to the attention of potential investors. In addition, I understand that the IDA also has a 31 hectare greenfield site in Oakfield in the same County. The planned layout of this site is subject to the construction of the Western Distributor Road. Sligo County Council has advised the Agency that this work will begin in Q4 2017. The construction of this road is necessary to provide access to the site and therefore increase its attractiveness for FDI.

Brexit Issues

110. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the actions taken by State agencies to make exporters aware of the tariffs that would be payable in the event of a hard Brexit through WTO rules; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33292/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Brexit will undoubtedly have a range of impacts on firms. In terms of a hard Brexit and the application of WTO rules, one must remember that this represents a worst case scenario, which is an outcome whereby no trade deal is reached between the UK and EU. This is just one of a range of potential outcomes and not necessarily the one that we expect will result.

Ireland and our partners in the EU are working hard to achieve the best outcome for citizens and companies.

However, we must continue to prepare for whatever outcome emerges. My Department and the Enterprise Agencies are fully committed to supporting business and all of our stakeholders in this period of heightened uncertainty.

Enterprise Ireland and the LEOs are steadily working with companies to make sure that they are better prepared to respond to the challenges that Brexit will bring. These are the medium term, strategic actions that I know that companies are calling for – things like helping them to drive down costs, diversify into new markets and innovate in the way they do business.

Enterprise Ireland has been systematically engaging with its 1,500 clients that export to the UK and is providing information and guidance, market diversification support and competitiveness and market development support to help companies prepare for the future trading relationship with the UK.

Enterprise Ireland launched the ‘Prepare for Brexit’ campaign, which features the SME Scorecard tool. The Scorecard is an interactive online platform which can be used by all companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit and areas they may need to consider preparing further on in the context of Brexit. EI has also introduced a ‘Be Prepared Grant’ which offers up to €5,000 in funding to support exporting client companies develop a Brexit Action Plan. The ‘Prepare for Brexit’ campaign aims to encourage more SMEs to prepare for Brexit and start putting in place detailed plans to mitigate risks and leverage opportunities that may arise, now that Brexit negotiations have begun.

My Department has funded a research project commissioned by InterTrade Ireland and undertaken by the ESRI to improve our understanding of the impact on cross border trade of

different trade and tariff regimes which might be imposed following Brexit. The report based on this research has recently been published and provides useful data on the extent and concentration of cross border trade, including information on this trade by product and firm types and barriers to trade. It provides an evidence-based analysis of the factual, worst-case scenario, using robust data.

The application of WTO tariffs, post Brexit, in the absence of a wider UK-EU trade deal could have far reaching implications. With regard to North-South trade in particular, the impact could be significant, as one sixth of exports by SME in the Republic of Ireland go to Northern Ireland and two thirds of exports by Northern Irish SMEs go to the Republic of Ireland.

Of the 5,000 individual products that are listed with the WTO, the tariffs applied by the EU on non-members without a specific trade deal range from 0% to over 80%. As a result, a WTO arrangement would impact trade quite differently depending on the trade structure and this is why it is so important to provide a focused analysis of the cross-border trade flows.

Findings such as those contained in the ITI study, therefore, accentuate the need ultimately for a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between the EU and the UK in the future – this is a shared ambition of the Irish Government, the EU and the UK.

My Department has provided financial assistance to InterTrade Ireland to provide a range of additional services to SMEs trading across the border, to help them to prepare for Brexit. This includes advising companies of the tariff applicable to individual products, which enables companies to plan accordingly. As the specific tariffs applicable to products even within broad product ranges can vary considerably, this is a valuable service for such exporters.

Brexit Issues

111. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the threats identified by her Department for importers in the context of Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33299/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): In advance of the Referendum my Department conducted a contingency risk assessment of the potential impacts of Brexit across policy areas of my Department. We have refined our analysis post-Referendum and we have been working with Agencies to put in place actions to mitigate risks and maximize opportunities.

More specifically, we have a number of streams of work underway which will address the threats to importers.

My Department has funded a research project commissioned by InterTrade Ireland to improve our understanding of the impact on cross border trade of different trade and tariff regimes which might be imposed following Brexit. This research provides useful data on the extent and concentration of cross border trade, including information on this trade by product and firm types and barriers to trade. A report based on this research was recently published while further, more detailed research on cross-border trade continues.

My Department is also currently undertaking research to examine the implications for the most exposed enterprise sectors - in terms of trading and economic relationships - of a range of scenarios including that of the UK being outside of the European Single Market and Customs Union. This research will inform an assessment of the way in which Brexit will affect individual sectors of the economy. The wholesale and retails sector is the largest private sector em-

ployer in Ireland and is very exposed to the impact of Brexit, particularly in terms of imports. Reflecting this, the retail sector is one of the sectors included in this study.

As part of another major study, my Department is profiling the composition of trade and investment for Ireland and a range of EU Member States with the UK - this will provide an evidence base to inform Ireland's policy positions as part of the wider negotiation on the UK's future relationship with the EU. The impact on imports will be considered as part of this exercise.

As I mentioned, the retail sector is particularly impacted by Brexit – especially as a result of the large proportion of imports sourced through and from the UK. My Department convenes quarterly meetings of the Retail Consultation Forum to hear the sectors concerns and to work together on finding practical solutions to the key issues faced by the sector. Brexit has been placed as a standing item on the agenda of the Retail Forum. A range of retail representative bodies have been included in stakeholder engagements organised by my Brexit unit, and are included in the membership of the Department's Enterprise Forum on Brexit and Global Challenges.

Foreign Direct Investment

112. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the actions taken by her Department and State agencies to identify a positive regional spread to foreign direct investment which may arise as a result of Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33303/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Government remains committed to ensuring the most even possible spread of foreign direct investment (FDI), whether Brexit-related or otherwise, throughout the country. This is evidenced by the IDA's commitment - reaffirmed last week at the Agency's announcement of its mid-year results - of increasing FDI in every region of Ireland by 30% to 40% by 2019. Progress is being made towards that target and in 2016 over half of the jobs created by the IDA supported companies were outside Dublin. Projects announced by IDA client companies in 2017 also reflect a continuing trend of increased investment in regional Ireland by overseas firms.

The IDA, in its engagement with prospective new or expanding investors, always promotes the benefits of regional Ireland. This includes detailing the strengths and advantages that Ireland's regions may enjoy over the country's main urban areas. Available properties in the regions that may be suitable for investors are also regularly brought to the attention of overseas companies considering expanding or locating here.

It is important to remember that while the IDA does everything in its power to ensure an even spread of investments across Ireland, the ultimate decision on where to locate is always taken by the company itself. It is also the case that certain investors sometimes have a strong preference for our major urban areas on account of their own commercial or operational reasons.

Enterprise Support Schemes

113. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Be Prepared grants issued by Enterprise Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33308/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Enterprise Ireland's (EI) #PrepareforBrexit communications campaign includes a "Be Prepared Grant" that supports the costs of EI's SME clients in preparing a plan to mitigate risks and optimise opportunities.

This grant can be used to help cover consultancy, travel and out of pocket expenses associated with researching the direction of their Brexit action plan. This might involve developing new strategies to maintain and grow existing UK exports, investigating the feasibility of diversifying to new markets and market segments; investment in innovation; improvement in operational competitiveness; or enhancement of strategic financial capability.

There have been a number of applications for the "Be Prepared Grant". However, EI does not publish grant application information, which is standard practice for all grant approvals' processes. As grant approvals come on stream over the next couple of months, Enterprise Ireland will report them.

Brexit Documents

114. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of companies which have completed the Brexit scorecard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33309/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The "Brexit SME Scorecard" launched by Enterprise Ireland (EI) in March 2017, is a new interactive online platform which can be used by Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit.

To date 1,150 companies have used the EI Brexit Scorecard to help assess their level of preparedness for Brexit. This includes both EI clients and non-EI clients.

By completing the online questionnaire, the Brexit SME Scorecard will provide companies with an assessment of their preparedness under six key pillars - Business Strategy, Operations, Innovation, Sales and Marketing, Finance and People Management. The Scorecard then generates an immediate report which contains suggested actions, resources and information on events in order to prepare for Brexit.

The SME Scorecard is available to all companies looking to develop an action plan to help mitigate risks and leverage opportunities which may arise from Brexit.

For Enterprise Ireland clients, a 'Be Prepared Grant' has been introduced, which offers up to €5,000 in funding to support exporting client companies develop a Brexit Action Plan.

Brexit Issues

115. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33342/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union will have a significant impact on our economy. It is essential that we understand these impacts, positive and negative, on the entire economy, across all policy areas of my Department, and at a sectoral level.

Following on from publication of the document setting out the Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations, work is underway across departments to prepare adaptive Sectoral Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on on-going cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders, and will encompass the following themes:

- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;
- Policies to make Irish enterprise more resilient, to diversify trade, to promote investment and innovation patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;
- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;
- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;
- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises
- where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

Within my own Department, a risk assessment of the potential impacts of Brexit across policy areas which has fed into the national level assessment led by the Department of Taoiseach was conducted following the referendum result. My Department has since been working with enterprise development agencies to mitigate risks and maximize opportunities.

With regard to impacts at a sectoral level a range of work has been done or is underway including:

- There have been a number of useful studies published which set out the potential impacts of Brexit, including sectoral assessments (e.g. tourism, agri-food), and many of these are listed on merrionstreet.ie website;
- My Department published the findings of a survey of 1,045 SME business owners and has set out a number of actions being developed to support SMEs in responding to the challenges of Brexit.
- My Department funded a research project commissioned by InterTrade Ireland to improve our understanding of the impact on cross border trade of different trade and tariff regimes which might be imposed following Brexit. The research, conducted by ESRI, which was recently published provides useful data on the extent and concentration of cross border trade, including information on this trade by product and firm types and barriers to trade;
- My Department is currently undertaking research to examine the implications for the most exposed enterprise sectors - in terms of trading and economic relationships - of the UK being outside of the European Single Market and Customs Union. This research will inform an assessment of the way in which Brexit will affect individual sectors of the economy.
- In addition we are profiling the composition of trade and investment for Ireland and a range of EU Member States with the UK - this will provide an evidence base to inform Ireland's policy positions as part of the wider negotiation on the UK's future relationship with the EU.

Brexit and the changing global trading environment were significant considerations in drawing up the 2017 Action Plan for Jobs. This year's plan is at the core of the government's response to the huge challenge these pose for businesses - to make sure our enterprise base is

resilient in the face of changes to come. This was reflected in the 10 percent increase secured by my Department in this year's capital allocation. Finally, we will also, in the context of Budget 2018, seek to secure the necessary additional resources required to put in place more supports for companies most impacted by Brexit.

Workplace Relations Commission

116. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the powers that the Workplace Relations Commission has to request attendance at one of their hearings (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33359/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) is an independent, statutory body which was established on 1st October 2015 under the Workplace Relations Act 2015. The WRC's core services include the provision of early resolution, mediation, conciliation, facilitation and advisory services, adjudication on employment and equality complaints, the monitoring of employment conditions to ensure the compliance and enforcement of employment rights legislation, the provision of information, and the processing of employment agency and protection of young persons (employment) licences.

The WRC is independent in the exercise of its quasi-judicial function and I as Minister have no direct involvement in its day to day operations.

Adjudication Officers of the WRC are statutorily independent in their decision making duties as they relate to adjudicating on complaints referred to them by the Director General of the WRC. The Adjudication Officer's role is to hold a hearing where both parties are given an opportunity to be heard and to present any evidence relevant to the complaint. If a complainant does not attend a hearing, the Adjudication Officer may find that the complaint fails for want of prosecution. If the respondent does not attend the Adjudication Officer may proceed and make a decision based on the information and evidence available. Decisions of an Adjudication Officer may be appealed to the Labour Court within the legislative time limits prescribed.

Under Section 41(10) of the Workplace Relations Act 2015 an Adjudication Officer may require the attendance of a person to attend a hearing to give evidence or produce documentation relevant to his/her inquiry into a complaint under a broad suite of employment rights legislation. Any person who fails or refuses to comply with a notice from an Adjudication Officer or refuses to give evidence in proceedings or fails or refuses to produce any document to which the notice relates shall be guilty of an offence. Similarly, when investigating complaints under the Employment Equality Acts an Adjudication Officer has the power to compel a person to attend a hearing to give evidence or produce documentation relevant to his/her investigation in accordance with the provisions of Section 95 of this legislation.

It is unclear if the Deputy's question relates to the adjudication process or the conciliation process within the WRC. With regard to the conciliation service, participation by parties is voluntary as are the outcomes of that process. The conciliation process is initiated by a referral of the dispute to the WRC by either or both parties involved. In serious disputes the Commission itself may, where no referral has been made, intervene and invite both parties concerned to conciliation. On receipt of a referral, other than a joint referral, the Conciliation Service of the Commission seeks the agreement of the other party to attend a conciliation conference but that service has no further role where such agreement is not forthcoming, or where its invitation has been declined.

IDA Site Visits

117. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA client visits to Dublin mid west in 2015, 2016 and to date 2017, by month, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33442/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): IDA Ireland collates data on client site visits on a county and quarterly basis. The Agency does not compile information on site visits to particular parts of individual counties.

The table sets out the number of site visits to Dublin by quarter from 2015 to 2017.

IDA Site Visits to Dublin 2015 to Q1 2017

Dublin	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2015	58	38	80	66	242
2016	57	88	59	80	284
2017	82				

Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

118. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission examination of waste companies; if she has satisfied herself that there is diversity and competition within the waste collection market; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33443/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): 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. Section 9 (5) of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014 provides that the CCPC is independent in the performance of its functions. I, as Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, have no direct function in such matters.

I am informed that the CCPC has engaged extensively both with the sector and with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment on its concerns regarding compliance with both competition and consumer protection legislation. I understand that the CCPC has formed these concerns based on a significant amount of contacts from consumers and anecdotal evidence. In particular, the CCPC has concerns about the extent of competition in some areas, where consumers have little, if any, choice of waste collector. Specifically with regard to anti-competitive behaviour, a number of allegations have been received but with insufficient evidence to merit the CCPC opening formal investigations.

The CCPC is being asked to report on the operation of the household waste collection market in order to inform the future development of national waste management policy before the end of 2017, which will provide an evidence base to establish a regulator to prevent price gouging.

Insurance Industry

119. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the reason vehicles which are over ten years of age and pass the national car test can be refused insurance quotes from a large

percentage of providers. [33214/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): 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 position 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 direct insurance companies as to the pricing level or terms or conditions that they should apply in respect of particular categories of drivers or vehicles.

Policy in relation to the NCT lies with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. The NCT was introduced to comply with an EU Roadworthiness Testing Directive aimed at improving road safety and environmental protection. While the NCT is one component of having safer vehicles on our roads, every vehicle owner has a personal and legal responsibility to ensure that their vehicles are roadworthy and well maintained. The NCT is an inspection or general “health check” of what is visible and accessible on the day of the test and includes a check of the roadworthiness of such safety features, amongst others, as lighting, brakes and tyres.

The NCT is a minimum requirement of roadworthiness and is therefore not the only rating factor taken into account in the provision of motor insurance. Insurers will generally require that a car has a valid NCT in order to be covered. However, in making their individual decisions on whether to offer cover and what terms to apply, they will also use a combination of other rating factors, including the age of the driver, the type and age of car, the claims record and driving experience of the driver, the number of drivers, how the car is used, etc. My understanding is that insurers do not all use the same combination of rating factors, and as a result prices and availability of cover varies across the market. In addition, insurance companies will price in accordance with their own past claims experience, meaning that in relation to the age of a car and the availability of cover, different insurance companies will use different age thresholds.

The Deputy should note that, according to the terms of the Declined Cases Agreement, the insurance market will not refuse to provide insurance to an individual seeking insurance if he/she has approached at least three insurers and has not been able to obtain cover from them. Insurance Ireland can be contacted in this regard at declined@insuranceireland.eu or 01-6761914 or 01-6761820.

Help-To-Buy Scheme Assessment

120. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 67 of 5 July 2017, the amount that will be paid to a company (details supplied) to produce the economic impact assessment of the help-to-buy scheme. [33126/17]

121. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the decision to award the contract for the economic impact assessment of the help to buy scheme to a company (details supplied) in view of the fact that housing is not listed as one of that company’s areas of expertise in public policy. [33138/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 120 and 121 together.

My Department complies with all relevant public procurement legislation including EU

regulations. The core principles of the EU procurement directives are transparency, equal treatment, open competition, and sound procedural management. They are designed to achieve a procurement market that is competitive, open, and well regulated.

A Request for Tenders (RFT) was issued on 23 February 2017. Three tenders were received by the Department on foot of the RFT. Applicants were required to meet the following criteria:

- Economic and financial standing; tenderers must be of good financial standing and demonstrate that they will be in a position to deliver a contract of this nature.

- Technical and professional ability including experience of the independent body/expert in analysing the residential property market in Ireland, experience of examining the economic effects of tax policy interventions and experience of conducting economic policy research with Government departments,

Indecon was awarded the contract for the review following the evaluation process undertaken by my officials and conducted in accordance with the relevant regulations.

The final amount payable by the Department of Finance upon the satisfactory completion of the review is dependent on allowable additional costs, if any, and so is not yet known. However, I can confirm to the Deputy that the base contract amount agreed by the Department and the contractor is consistent with the Department's anticipated cost estimate, set out in paragraph 1.6 of the RFT (i.e. approximately €50,000 ex. VAT). The final amount paid to the contractor will be published in due course.

Tax Code

122. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to ring fence a percentage of moneys from betting duty and-or tax to be distributed to the relevant Department for the provision of problem gambling treatment and prevention services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33174/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Hypothecation is not a feature of the Irish tax system in general. I am not in favour of hypothecation of revenue receipts as it reduces the flexibility of the Government to prioritise and allocate funds as necessary at a particular time.

Motor Insurance Costs

123. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence (details supplied); the steps he is taking to address rising motor insurance costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33180/17]

124. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Finance if he will respond to matters raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33181/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 123 and 124 together.

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 pro-

vision 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 position 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 review individual cases nor to direct insurance companies as to the pricing level or terms or conditions that they should apply in particular cases.

However, I do accept that it is possible for the State to play a role in helping to stabilise the market and deal with factors contributing to the cost of insurance. For this reason, my predecessor as Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan T.D. established the Cost of Insurance Working Group in 2016 in consultation with the Central Bank and other Departments and Agencies.

The initial focus of the Working Group was the issue of rising motor insurance costs and its Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance was published in January 2017. The Report makes 33 recommendations with 71 associated actions to be carried out in agreed timeframes, which are clearly set out in an Action Plan. 45 of these action points are due to be implemented by the end of this year with the remainder scheduled for completion before the conclusion of 2018.

There is a commitment within the Report that the Working Group will prepare quarterly updates on its progress and the first such update was published in early May.

My Department will publish the second quarterly update shortly. This update will again show the progress to date on the overall implementation of the recommendations, with a particular focus on the 17 action points which were due for completion in the second quarter of 2017.

I believe that the implementation of the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance will make a difference to the pricing of insurance premiums over the next 18 months. I also believe that the Setanta judgment, by finding that MIBI is not liable to meet third party claims, removes a major uncertainty from industry, which I would expect to be reflected in pricing in the short to medium term.

In relation to the Deputy's query about ability of insurers from other EU countries to compete in the Irish market, it should be noted that the EU framework allows for the freedom to provide services from one Member State into another throughout the Union. This is a key principle of the European Union and is availed of by a number of insurance firms established in Ireland in order to conduct business into other EU Member States, and by companies which are authorised elsewhere conducting business into the Irish market. This can be done either through:

- establishing a branch operation in the host country and thus conducting business on a 'freedom of establishment' (FOE) basis; or
- writing business from the home country (i.e. where authorised) into the host country on a 'freedom of services' (FOS) basis.

Flood Risk Insurance Cover Provision

125. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Finance the options available to homeowners and businesses in Leitrim village that are being refused flood insurance cover despite major drainage works and upgrades that have been carried out by Leitrim County Council in recent years following flooding in the village; if he will advise residents and businesses accordingly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33224/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am conscious of the difficulties that the absence or withdrawal of flood insurance cover can cause to homeowners and businesses, and that is one of the reasons the Government has been prioritising investment in flood defences over the last number of years.

However, the provision of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered is a commercial matter for insurance companies and is based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept and adequate provisioning to meet those risks. As Minister for Finance I have responsibility for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation, and neither I, nor the Central Bank of Ireland, can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products or have the power to direct insurance companies to provide flood cover to specific individuals or businesses. This position 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.

Government policy in relation to flooding is focused on the development of a sustainable, planned and risk-based approach to dealing with flooding problems. This in turn should lead to the increased availability of flood insurance. To achieve this aim, there is a focus on:

- prioritising spending on flood relief measures by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and relevant local authorities,
- development and implementation of plans by the OPW to implement flood relief schemes, and
- improving channels of communication between the OPW and the insurance industry in order to reach a better understanding about the provision of flood cover in marginal areas.

While it is not possible for me to comment in detail on individual cases without the full facts, Leitrim County Council has advised me that a number of works on flood relief in Leitrim village were completed in 2016 under the Severe Weather Allocation programme funded by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. I understand these works include the installation of non-return flood valves, upgrade of the surface water system and the raising and repair of roads.

I am also informed by the OPW that Leitrim village is one of 300 Areas for Further Assessment included in OPW's Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. I understand that a preferred option to deal with the risk of flooding has been identified following local consultation and that flood risk management plans are now being finalised.

Finally, you should be aware that a consumer can make a complaint to the Financial Services Ombudsman in relation to any dealings with a Financial Services or Insurance provider during which they feel they have been unfairly treated. In addition, individuals who are experiencing difficulty in obtaining flood insurance or believe that they are being treated unfairly may contact Insurance Ireland which operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to insurance.

Tax Compliance

126. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 54 of 5 July 2017, if he will provide a copy of the compliance checks and reports to which he refers. [33269/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As previously indicated to the Deputy, Revenue carries out regular compliance checks on all lenders to ensure correct operation of the mortgage interest relief scheme. Additionally, all information in regard to the operation of the scheme is made available to the Comptroller & Auditor General for examination.

Revenue is constrained by Section 851A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 from providing details of individual compliance checks on individual lenders but has now confirmed that all 2,687 issues raised in relation to the May compliance checks have been resolved.

Excise Duties Yield

127. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide the excise returns to date in 2017, by category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33271/17]

128. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated impact on excise duty receipts of the apparent practice of tobacco firms building up stocks in advance of the introduction of plain packaging; the impact this has had on Exchequer returns in 2016 and to date in 2017; when he expects excise receipts to return to normal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33272/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 127 and 128 together.

I am informed by Revenue that the breakdown of the net Excise receipts by category for 2016 and the period January to June 2017 is as shown in the table. Please note that receipts shown for 2017 are provisional.

Net Excise Receipts	2016	2017
		(6 Mths.)
	€m	€m
Alcohol	1,208	561
Tobacco	1,098	257
Oils	2,173	994
Carbon	430	231
VRT	814	522
Betting	51	25
Licences	22	5
Total	5,796	2,596

I am advised by Revenue that tobacco receipts in 2016 were €1,098 million which is €15.4 million ahead of the receipts in 2015. The increased receipts in 2016 were in part due to the practice of tobacco firms building up stocks. This has resulted in lower clearances of stock and receipts for the first half of 2017.

Tobacco firms are presently building up stocks again in advance of the introduction of plain packaging. Tobacco products manufactured for retail sale in Ireland must comply with the standardised packaging requirements from 30 September 2017. However, products manufactured before this date can continue to be sold until 30 September 2018 without complying with standardised packaging requirements.

The result will be increased tobacco receipts in the second half of 2017 and, as a result, total tobacco receipts for 2017 are expected to be greater than the tobacco receipts in 2016.

NAMA Expenditure

129. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Finance the receivers working for NAMA and the fees paid to same in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [33273/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The information sought by the Deputy is provided by NAMA and is set out in the table for the period from 2011 to date.

Note figures may not total due to rounding.

	IP Firm	IP Fees 2011	IP Fees 2012	IP Fees 2013	IP Fees 2014	IP Fees 2015	IP Fees 2016	IP Fees 2017	Total IP Fees
		€		€	€	€	€	€	€
1	Alder King	-	-	-	-	8,502	-	-	8,502
2	Allsop	450,000	-	7,130	543,661	105,750	95,000	-	1,201,541
3	Bannon Commercial	3,750	15,000	114,165	84,553	56,450	46,725	-	320,643
4	BDO	480,193	298,600	663,442	842,086	1,023,692	518,340	22,375	3,848,728
5	BDO UK	521,461	835,615	513,958	442,101	135,443	53,700	-	2,502,278
6	Begbies Traynor	209,382	216,765	194,017	184,932	77,470	2,250	-	884,816
7	BNP/Allsops	-	-	-	2,360	-	-	-	2,360
8	BTW Shiells	60,756	33,197	2,084	64,487	-	-	-	160,524
9	Capita Symonds	45,232	40,906	-	-	-	-	-	86,138
10	Cavanagh Kelly	-	18,333	8,380	3,624	-	-	-	30,337
11	CBRE	130,188	117,332	7,500	7,500	938	-	-	263,458
12	CBRE UK	-	66,375	22,383	99,767	-	-	-	188,525
13	Chantrey Vellacott	16,667	36,553	94,297	218,460	-	-	-	365,977
14	Colliers	-	-	13,100	9,850	-	-	-	22,950
15	Colliers UK	-	10,030	3,186	-	-	-	-	13,216
16	Cordes & Co	-	43,395	66,276	-	-	-	-	109,671
17	Crowe Howarth	55,333	151,534	372,003	690,623	780,285	602,154	180,340	2,832,272
18	Cushman Wakefield (UK)	-	3,403	3,321	-	-	-	-	6,724
19	CVR Global	-	-	-	-	-	16,667	33,333	50,000
20	Deloitte	658,233	796,291	807,017	1,004,876	1,038,985	1,133,144	835,325	6,273,871
21	Deloitte (UK)	90,730	84,333	77,880	123,711	441,646	-	-	818,301
22	Douglas Newman Good	-	4,166	77,083	68,750	75,834	35,000	-	260,833
23	Dr Peter Minuth (Piepenburg Geerling)	-	-	-	84,000	504,000	-	-	588,000
24	DTZ	7,380	62,730	46,780	38,500	33,210	-	-	188,600
25	DTZ - Now CBRE	-	2,500	2,500	2,500	-	-	-	7,500
26	Duff & Phelps	983,992	1,155,898	1,482,497	1,867,732	1,960,975	796,245	341,916	8,589,255
27	Duff & Phelps LLP	-	-	359,671	1,298,686	-	-	-	1,658,357

	IP Firm	IP Fees 2011	IP Fees 2012	IP Fees 2013	IP Fees 2014	IP Fees 2015	IP Fees 2016	IP Fees 2017	Total IP Fees
		€		€	€	€	€	€	€
28	Ernst & Young	449,927	967,073	1,066,075	921,950	1,094,314	396,395	100,000	4,995,734
29	Ernst & Young UK	93,810	31,860	27,730	-	-	-	-	153,400
30	Eddisons	-	-	-	4,167	9,108	-	-	13,275
31	Edward Symmonds/Lambert Smith Hampton	-	28,882	23,193	30,348	13,335	-	-	95,758
32	Edward Symmons	-	39,648	41,421	15,933	14,750	5,940	-	117,692
33	Ferris & Associates	587,748	359,305	488,193	210,393	144,720	-	220,000	2,010,359
34	Friel Stafford	-	24,000	105,498	100,130	78,983	40,944	-	349,555
35	FRP Advisory	-	156,755	20,000	337,329	143,565	-	-	657,649
36	Ganly Waters (formerly Knight Frank)	43,520	121,300	8,400	41,850	2,625	12,810	7691.25	238,197
37	Grant Thornton	1,566,113	2,023,534	2,414,292	2,474,273	2,242,772	1,272,947	384,342	12,378,273
38	Grant Thornton (UK)	1,236,387	1,111,038	1,637,269	735,653	184,897	-	-	4,905,244
39	GVA Bilfinger	-	-	-	-	-	30,000	-	30,000
40	GVA Donal O'Buachalla	3,100	98,875	180,652	297,801	254,379	106,986	26,000	967,793
41	GVA Grimley	378,246	141,756	63,914	192,851	32,353	9,540	-	818,659
42	HBC	19,568	17,266	4,316	-	-	-	-	41,150
43	Hooke & McDonald	-	-	30,565	32,545	27,091	-	-	90,201
44	Hughes Blake	-	66,550	368,992	328,987	313,276	136,306	14,983	1,229,094
45	HWBC	-	188,625	215,396	175,000	364,500	320,000	-	1,263,521
46	HWBC Allsop	-	-	-	10,040	24,133	-	-	34,173
47	Irvine Nott	-	-	-	5,900	-	-	-	5,900
48	Johnston Carmichael	-	70,800	64,900	18,880	-	-	-	154,580
49	Jones Lang LaSalle	12,980	89,160	109,160	135,623	95,000	37,000	-	478,923
50	Keenan Corporate	153,410	310,223	297,760	199,273	71,971	22,868	-	1,055,505
51	Knight Frank (now Ganly Walters)	-	-	9,600	6,000	15,000	-	-	30,600
52	KPMG	1,292,726	1,838,161	2,164,172	1,859,413	1,748,573	832,083	117,425	9,852,554
53	KPMG UK	598,702	1,603,370	726,064	326,875	211,970	146,025	-	3,613,006
54	Lambert Smith Hampton	95,808	95,808	107,577	84,730	105,445	2,950	-	492,318
55	Lisney	-	222,455	275,897	162,212	120,550	-	-	781,114
56	Mason Owen Lyons	-	30,000	36,000	37,400	35,380	13,785	-	152,565
57	Mazars	638,878	802,500	1,002,295	1,622,067	1,639,495	1,199,418	525,446	7,430,099
58	McKeogh Gallagher Ryan	178,129	238,199	397,162	618,567	653,116	302,830	79,850	2,467,853

Questions - Written Answers

	IP Firm	IP Fees 2011	IP Fees 2012	IP Fees 2013	IP Fees 2014	IP Fees 2015	IP Fees 2016	IP Fees 2017	Total IP Fees
		€		€	€	€	€	€	€
59	McPeake Auctioneers	-	-	3,700	17,800	14,780	-	-	36,280
60	McStay Luby	560,745	274,374	266,174	296,645	348,254	475,773	192,120	2,414,086
61	Moore Stephens Nathans	-	-	-	-	42,515	-	-	42,515
62	O'Connor Pyne & Co Limited	-	-	-	-	21,125	-	-	21,125
63	O'Dwyer Property Management	-	155,915	146,021	157,088	175,535	127,842	39,800	802,201
64	Osborne King	6,136	6,313	2,974	10,195	-	-	-	25,618
65	PKF O'Connor Leddy Holmes	-	-	-	7,000	5,691	-	-	12,691
66	PKF/BDO UK	-	28,615	341,020	-	-	-	-	369,635
67	PwC	911,769	1,294,498	1,581,837	1,395,919	893,638	659,308	223,829	6,960,798
68	PwC UK	289,882	334,908	340,710	54,785	-	-	-	1,020,285
69	RSM Ireland / Baker Tilly	896,382	589,137	656,992	572,705	879,937	624,815	607,100	4,827,068
70	RSM McClure Watters	268,680	156,553	253,009	274,534	85,330	-	-	1,038,105
71	RSM UK / Baker Tilly (UK)	1,061,641	1,433,372	949,933	733,088	602,703	104,760	4,378	4,889,874
72	Russell Brennan Keane	17,755	37,457	77,022	163,067	420,036	412,902	149,565	1,277,803
73	Savills	283,324	372,531	378,453	225,667	195,000	162,500	94,003	1,711,478
74	Smith Williamson	-	103,610	270,049	411,936	384,188	138,980	24,302	1,333,065
75	SPW UK	52,794	50,698	43,056	2,778	-	-	-	149,326
76	WK Nowlan	63,985	41,200	36,630	90,678	39,577	-	-	272,070
		15,475,442	19,549,278	22,172,743	23,082,832	19,992,789	10,894,932	4,224,123	115,392,138

Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme

130. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to review the qualifying criteria for the disabled drivers and disabled passengers scheme and the primary medical certificate which underpins it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33274/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Scheme provides relief from VAT and VRT, up to a certain limit, on the purchase of an adapted car for transport of a person with specific severe and permanent physical disabilities, payment of a fuel grant, and an exemption from Motor Tax.

To qualify for the Scheme an applicant must be in possession of a Primary Medical Certificate. To qualify for a Primary Medical Certificate, an applicant must be permanently and severely disabled within the terms of the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994 and satisfy one of the following conditions:

- be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both legs;

- be wholly without the use of one leg and almost wholly without the use of the other leg such that the applicant is severely restricted as to movement of the lower limbs;
- be without both hands or without both arms;
- be without one or both legs;
- be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both hands or arms and wholly or almost wholly without the use of one leg;
- have the medical condition of dwarfism and have serious difficulties of movement of the lower limbs.

The criteria to qualify for the Scheme are necessarily precise and specific. After six months a citizen can reapply if there is a deterioration in their condition.

The Scheme represents a significant tax expenditure. Between the Vehicle Registration Tax and VAT foregone, and the fuel grant provided for members of the Scheme, the Scheme represented a cost of €65 million in 2016. This does not include the revenue foregone to the Local Government Fund in respect of the relief from Motor Tax provided to members of the Scheme.

I recognise the important role that the Scheme plays in expanding the mobility of citizens with disabilities and that the relief has been maintained at current levels throughout the crisis despite the requirement for significant fiscal consolidation. From time to time I receive representations from individuals who feel they would benefit from the Scheme but do not qualify under the six criteria. While I have sympathy for these cases, given the scale and scope of the Scheme, I have no plans to expand the medical criteria beyond the six currently provided for in the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994.

Revenue Commissioners Data

131. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance the number of EORI numbers issued by the Revenue Commissioners in 2015, 2016 and to date in 2017, if his Department has estimated the expected demand for additional EORI numbers in response to the challenges of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33290/17]

132. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance the number of companies with AEO status; if his Department expects demand for AEO status to increase as a result of Brexit; the actions taken by the Revenue Commissioners to anticipate this increased demand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33291/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 131 and 132 together.

I am informed by Revenue that it issued the following number of Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI) numbers:

Year	EORI numbers issued
2015	3252
2016	4952
2017 (YTD)	1303

An EORI (Economic Operators Registration and Identification system) number is a unique number that is valid throughout the EU and is used as a common reference number for interac-

tion with the customs authorities in any Member State. Registration may be done through Revenue's online service by businesses that are engaged in customs or excise activities, and is not required for normal trading within the EU. EORI registration does not confer any advantages in itself, but facilitates the registered business in gaining direct access to the EU customs and excise systems. After Brexit, the number of businesses needing to register in order to facilitate continued trade with the UK, will depend on the supply chain model of the business concerned, and on the type of relationship between UK and EU that is negotiated. For those reasons, Revenue advises that businesses concerned about future trading with the UK should not seek an EORI number at the present time. Revenue is currently engaged with representative bodies to identify business concerns, and when the Brexit process has progressed sufficiently a public campaign, supplemented by direct contact with businesses known to trade with the UK, will ensure that all businesses requiring registration will be accommodated in ample time.

It is not possible to give a reliable estimate of the likely increase in the EORI register after Brexit. The present total stands at 36,058.

There are 136 Economic Operators who currently hold a valid AEO Authorisation. Many of the current AEOs are major customs agents, forwarding companies or carriers, whose services are used by small or non-specialised traders. An AEO (Authorised Economic Operator) authorisation allows for simplified customs procedures under agreed protocols, and greatly reduces the need for checks at ports, airports and land borders. The current AEOs account for well in excess of 80% of trade between Ireland the non-EU countries, and it is very important for simplified trading procedures that the dominant role of AEOs continues after Brexit. However, in the same way that 36,058 EORI traders currently channel the bulk of their trade through 136 AEOs, it is likely that any increase in the number of traders after Brexit require a much smaller increase in AEO numbers. At the same time, there may be a demand for additional simplifications which will tend to increase AEO requirement.

It is worth restating that the outcome of Article 50 political negotiations cannot be prejudged, and the nature of the future trading relationships between the EU/Ireland and the UK, and, by extension, any customs regime that might apply, will be determined by those negotiations. It is premature to set out detailed possible solutions and important that technical solutions do not anticipate or drive outcomes at a political level.

Brexit Issues

133. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance the additional supports that will be required in the event of smuggling increasing as a result of tariff arbitrage in the event of hard Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33296/17]

134. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance the expected increased burden on IT systems for customs entries as a result of the impact of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33297/17]

135. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to increase support for IT support for customs entries as a result of the impact of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33298/17]

136. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if the Revenue Commissioners have undertaken a review of ports here in the context of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33300/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 133

to 136, inclusive, together.

Like all Government agencies, Revenue is actively engaged in examining a range of scenarios in order to support Ireland's objective of maintaining the closest possible trading relationship between the UK and the EU/Ireland, post Brexit. The precise trading arrangements that will apply after Brexit will depend on the outcome of negotiations between the EU and UK. Consequently, while Revenue do not prejudge the outcome of the political negotiations, for practical reasons Revenue's planning is based on the full range of possibilities, including the possibility that customs controls or processes will apply between Ireland and the UK.

Revenue has advised me that its officials are engaged in researching a range of contingencies primarily related to the movement of goods. It is clear that managing the volume of trade will be one of the biggest challenges post-Brexit.

At present, approximately 1.4million customs declarations are processed each year, representing import and export trade with non-EU countries. In addition, some 57,000 transit instances are processed. After Brexit, there is likely to be an increase in processing requirements, although estimation of demand is difficult and unreliable because of the likelihood of accompanying behavioural changes, and uncertainty about the exact arrangements that will be negotiated between UK and EU. Revenue is currently involved in procuring new computer software to implement customs systems required by the 2016 Union Customs Code which must become operational in stages between 2018 and 2022. Our EU colleagues are also engaged in redeveloping their systems to implement the Union Customs Code and to deal with additional volume that may arise after Brexit. The new systems will be scaled to accommodate maximum possible demand. The time required to complete new systems, and to allow software providers to adapt their business packages, may be such that they are not fully in place if customs with the UK is required in the short term, and contingencies are being explored to deal with that eventuality.

Revenue has a presence at the ports, airports, mail and parcel depots, and is in ongoing discussion with the relevant stakeholders, including on the implications of a much higher proportion of traffic requiring customs clearance.

The serious threat that smuggling poses to legitimate and compliant businesses, consumers and the Exchequer is recognised by Revenue. It is inherently difficult to predict levels of illegal activity, but targeting and disrupting all shadow economy activities, including smuggling, is always a priority. In 2016 there were a total of 16,658 individual seizures and 1,682 summary convictions for offences related to shadow economy activities. Additionally Revenue works closely with other Member States in order to combat illegal activity and in 2016 received over 1,500 requests for assistance from other Member States. In the same period Revenue received assistance from other Member States in relation to almost 700 cases.

As regards the island of Ireland, the Government's position in relation to the border with Northern Ireland in the context of Brexit is very clear. Continued freedom of movement, absence of an economic border, and protection of the Good Friday Agreement are key objectives for the Irish Government. The arrangements that will apply after Brexit will depend on the outcome of negotiations between the EU and UK. The Government is clear that any manifestation of an economic border would have very negative consequences. A key priority is to ensure the continued free flow of trade on the island and the need to avoid an economic border. Clearly in this regard the closer the trading relationship between the UK and EU is more generally the better. I would point out that the EU 27 guidelines for the Article 50 negotiation, specifically refer to the need to support and protect the achievements, benefits and commitments of the Peace Process. In this regard the guidelines recognise the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland, outlining the need for flexible and imaginative solutions, including with the aim of

avoiding a hard border, while respecting the integrity of the Union legal order.

I am satisfied that Revenue's preparatory work in relation to Brexit is proceeding well. A first allocation of 40 extra staff has been provided to enable scenarios to be developed and explored in conjunction with stakeholders, and as more clarity emerges in the course of EU-UK negotiation, appropriate resources will be provided to ensure a full state of readiness.

Brexit Issues

137. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33339/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department of Finance is working within the whole-of-Government framework for the preparation of sectoral Brexit response plans. This is to ensure that Ireland will be in a position to counter negative economic impacts arising from Brexit, that Ireland's interests are protected in the negotiations at EU level and also that Ireland can seek to maximise opportunities arising, including in the financial services sector.

The Department of Finance has been assessing and preparing for the impact of Brexit since well before the UK referendum in June 2016. Work was carried out in the Department to assess the potential economic and financial sector implications arising, including the study, published in November 2015 under the ESRI-Department of Finance research programme, entitled 'Scoping the Possible Economic Implications of Brexit on Ireland'. Following the referendum, Budget 2017 included a number of measures to respond to the challenges of Brexit, including measures to support SMEs, entrepreneurship, agri-food and Irish exporters. These measures were informed by the Department's sectoral exposure analysis published with Budget 2017. Additional research work on Modelling the Medium to Long Term Potential Macroeconomic Impact of Brexit on Ireland was published in November 2016 and an updated sectoral exposure analysis in March 2017.

The Department of Finance contingency work is mainstreamed across all divisions and focusses on economic and financial sector impacts. The Department will continue to carry out the necessary research, analysis and consultations, and to develop budgetary policy in the context of Brexit.

Departmental Correspondence

138. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance if a reply will issue to correspondence (details supplied) of 16 March 2017 in regard to exempt approval status of occupational pension schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33358/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): A reply to the correspondence concerned was issued on 3rd July 2017.

Banking Sector

139. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will investigate a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied) in relation to the use of contactless electronic

payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33364/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The question appears to concern the possible security implications of information displayed on the merchant receipt following a contactless payment transaction. Contactless payments carried out using credit or debit cards use the same secure payment technology as payments made with cards that are not contactless enabled.

It is normal for a merchant to receive the card number and expiry date, as the merchant ordinarily requires those details to execute the payment transaction. I understand that the Payment Card Industry's Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) requires merchants to protect cardholder data and payment card information, whether it is printed, processed, transmitted or stored. Best practice is to not display the card number in full on a receipt, and card numbers are generally truncated or masked to show only the final four digits. In addition, the CVV and PIN number, which are required to execute non-contactless payments, are not included on a receipt.

Any cardholder who has concerns on how a merchant displays his or her payment card information should raise the issue either directly with the merchant or with the bank that issued the card. If dissatisfied with the response of the bank, the cardholder can refer a complaint to the Financial Services Ombudsman, which is an independent office established to deal with consumer complaints about their dealings with financial institutions.

Film Industry Tax Reliefs

140. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of tax relief given under the section 481 film relief scheme in each of the years 2015 and 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [33420/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the tax relief claimed under section 481 for the tax year 2015 is €69.7 million. This information will shortly be published on Revenue's webpage at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-expenditures.aspx>. Information for earlier years is included therein. Information in respect of the tax relief claimed by companies for the tax years 2016 and 2017 will not be available until after the returns for these years are filed.

National Economic Dialogue

141. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the attendees at the National Economic Dialogue in Dublin Castle on 28 and 29 June 2017, in tabular form. [33522/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform hosted the National Economic Dialogue on the 28 and 29 June 2017 in Dublin Castle. The Dialogue was an opportunity to consider how to make best use of the available resources in the interests of all citizens. The aim was to foster discussion on how best to sustain and strengthen the recovery in the interests of all while taking account of the many competing economic and social priorities within the limited fiscal space. The Dialogue was not intended to produce specific budget proposals or recommendations. The overarching theme of the Dialogue was "Sustainable and inclusive growth in the context of national and global challenges." Representatives of community, voluntary and environmental groups, business, unions, research institutes, the academic community and the media were invited. All members of the Select Committee on Budgetary Oversight were also invited to attend

and to participate.

Please see below the full attendance list for this year's Dialogue:

Surname	First Name	Organisation
Andrews	Ruth	Incoming Tour Operators Association Ireland
Arnold	Tom	Rapporteur
Barrett	Professor Alan	Chairman
Barry	Linda	Small Firms Association
Beausang	William	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Bell	Sean	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Berney	Liam	ICTU
Boland	Séamus	Irish Rural Link
Boyd-Barrett T.D.	Richard	Select Committee on Budgetary Oversight
Brady	Ger	IBEC
Broderick	Larry	ICTU
Browne	Margaret	ICTU
Bruton T.D.	Richard	Minister for Education and Skills
Buckley	Olivia	Irish Tax Institute
Burke	Fiona	Irish Exporters Association
Byrne	Nicola	Irish Exporters Association
Calleary T.D.	Dara	Select Committee on Budgetary Oversight
Callinan	John	Department of the Taoiseach
Callinan	Patricia	IBEC
Callinan	Kevin	ICTU
Carroll	Philip	Meat Industry Ireland
Clinch	Peter	National Competitiveness Council
Cody	Shay	ICTU
Coffey	Seamus	Irish Fiscal Advisory Council
Comer	John	Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
Conroy	Niall	Irish Fiscal Advisory Council
Cooper	Ivan	The Wheel
Costello	Pat	Chartered Accountants Ireland
Creed T.D.	Michael	Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Surname	First Name	Organisation
Cronin	Patricia	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
Cummins	Adrian	Restaurants Association Ireland
Davitt	Pat	IPAV
Dempsey	Shane	Construction Industry Federation
Dillon	Derrie	Macra na Feirme
Doheny	Dominic	Construction Industry Federation
Doherty T.D.	Regina	Minister for Employment and Social Protection
Dolan	John	Disability Federation of Ireland
Donohoe	Tony	IBEC
Donohoe T.D.	Paschal	Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform
Doorley	James	National Youth Council of Ireland
Doran	Liam	ICTU
Doyle T.D.	Andrew	Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with special responsibility for Food, Forestry and Horticulture
Duffy	Dr. David	IBEC
Duggan	Oonagh	Environmental Pillar
Ewing	Michael	Environmental Pillar
Farrell	Sinead	Irish Co-operative Organisation Society
Farrell	Elaine	Irish Farmers' Association
Feehily	Naomi	Age Action
Fenn	Tim	Irish Hotels Federation
FitzGerald	Professor John	Climate Change Advisory Council
Fitzgerald T.D.	Frances	Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise and Innovation
Flanagan	Maire	Department of the Taoiseach
Fraser	Martin	Department of the Taoiseach
Gallagher	John	The Wheel
Geraghty	Tom	ICTU
Green	Michael	Social Progress Imperative

Questions - Written Answers

Surname	First Name	Organisation
Griffin	Mark	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
Gunnell	Anne	Irish Tax Institute
Hayes	Mairéad	Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
Healy	Joe	Irish Farmers' Association
Healy	Cormac	Meat Industry Ireland
Healy	Dr Tom	Nevin Economic Research Institute
Healy	Dr. Seán	Social Justice Ireland
Hogan	John	Department of Finance
Hughes	David	ICTU
Joyce	David	ICTU
Kavanagh	Paddy	ICTU
Keegan	Brian	Chartered Accountants Ireland
Kelly	Paul	IBEC
Kelly	Liam	Workplace Relations Commission
Kent	Patrick	Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Association
Kerrins	Liz	Children's Rights Alliance
Kinahan	Noel	Irish Rural Link
King	Patricia	ICTU
King	Patrick	Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland
Lennon	Louise	Irish Rural Link
Lynam	Stephen	Department of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform
Lynch	Matthew	Department of Enterprise and Innovation
MacMahon	Dr. Bernadette	Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice
Maher	Valerie	One Family
Mair	Jeanette	Construction Industry Federation
Masterson	Siobhan	IBEC
McBride	Orlaith	Arts Council
McCafferty	John-Mark	Community Platform
McCarthy	John	Department of Finance
McCarthy	John	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
McCarthy	Ross	ISME

Surname	First Name	Organisation
McCormack	Gerry	ICTU
McCoy	Danny	IBEC
McDonald	Damien	Irish Farmers' Association
McDonnell	Dr Tom	Nevin Economic Research Institute
McElwee	Maeve	IBEC
McGibney	Aebhric	Chambers Ireland
McGuinness	Dr Seamus	Rapporteur
McKenna	Niamh	Change X
McManus	Brigid	Rapporteur
McQuinn	Professor Kieran	ESRI
Moran	Justin	Age Action
Moran	Derek	Department of Finance
Morgenroth	Dr Edgar	Rapporteur
Mulvihill	Conor	Irish Dairy Industries Association
Murphy	Karen	Irish Council for Social Housing
Murphy	Dr Mary	Rapporteur
Murphy	Michelle	Social Justice Ireland
Murphy T.D.	Eoghan	Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government
Murtagh	Ciaran	ISME
Naughten T.D.	Denis	Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment
Ní Chaithnía	Eilís	National Women's Council of Ireland
Ni Sheaghdha	Phil	ICTU
Nolan	Ann	Department of Finance
Nunan	Sheila	ICTU
O' Donoghue	Sean	Killybegs Fishermen's Association
Ó Foghlú	Seán	Department of Education and Skills
O'Brien	Nicholas	Department of Finance
O'Brien	Mindy	Environmental Pillar
O'Brien	Fergal	IBEC
O'Brien	Bríd	Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
O'Byrne	Hazel	Society of St. Vincent de Paul
O'Connell	Dr Larry	Rapporteur
O'Connor	Jack	ICTU
O'Donoghue	Liam	IBEC

Questions - Written Answers

Surname	First Name	Organisation
O'Donovan	Fiona	Disability Federation of Ireland
O'Donovan T.D.	Patrick	Minister of State at the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with special responsibility for Public Procurement, Open Government and eGovernment
O'Hara	Paul	Change X
O'Hora	Brendan	Chartered Accountants Ireland
O'Mahoney	Paul	Family Carers Ireland
O'Mara Walsh	Eoghan	Irish Tourism Industry Confederation
O'Neill	Sue	Small Firms Association
O'Sullivan	Paul	Clann Credo- Community Loan Finance
O'Toole	Paul	SOLAS
Parlon	Tom	Construction Industry Federation
Pratschke	Sheila	Arts Council
Pratt	Maurice	Irish Tourism Industry Confederation
Punch	Eddie	Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Association
Quinn	Dr. Orlaigh	Department of Enterprise and Innovation
Reidy	Owen	ICTU
Rigney	Peter	ICTU
Ruddock	Kate	Environmental Pillar
Ryan	Dr Joseph	Technological Higher Education Association
Ryan T.D.	Eamon	Select Committee on Budgetary Oversight
Sellars	Dermot	Co-operative Housing Ireland
Shaw	John	Department of the Taoiseach
Smyth	Paul	Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
1. St. Ledger	Andrew	Environmental Pillar
Stanley	Wayne	Community Platform
Stanley-Smith	Charles	Environmental Pillar
Stewart	Duncan	Environmental Pillar

Surname	First Name	Organisation
Stewart	John	Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
Sweeney	Dr. John	Labour Market Council
Talbot	Ian	Chambers Ireland
Timoney	Kevin	Irish Fiscal Advisory Council
Trainer	Cheral	Construction Industry Federation
Varadkar T.D.	Leo	Taoiseach
Vaughan	Anne	Department of Employment and Social Protection
Walker	Neil	IBEC
Walsh	Teresa	ICTU
Watt	Robert	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Webb	David	Protestant Aid
Whelan	Dr Adele	Rapporteur
Whelan	Brendan	Social Finance Foundation

VAT Rate Reductions

142. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if the VAT rate can be reduced to 20% (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33537/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The OECD, in its hierarchy of taxes, state that taxes on property and consumption are less harmful to economic growth than personal and corporate taxes. A reduction in the standard VAT rate from 23% to 20% would cost the Exchequer €1.23 billion in a full year.

I would point out that, as of 1 January 2017, 23 of the 28 EU Member States have a standard VAT rate of 20% or higher and the average standard rate in the EU is 21.5%. While Ireland's standard VAT rate is higher than the average rate, six Member States apply standard rates higher than 23% and 2 other Member States also apply a rate of 23%. Furthermore, the standard rate VAT differential between Ireland and the UK has narrowed from a high of 6.5 percentage points in 2009 to 3 percentage points since January 2012.

VAT Rate Application

143. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if he will retain the 9% VAT rate for labour intensive sectors (details supplied). [33538/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As part of the Government's Job Initiative in 2011, a temporary second reduced VAT rate of 9% was introduced in respect of tourism related services, including hotel and holiday accommodation; restaurant services, various entertainment services; the use of sporting facilities; hairdressing services; and various printed matter. This measure was aimed at boosting tourism and the creation of additional jobs in that sector.

From Budget 2014 it was decided to retain the 9% rate to support the increased number of jobs already in place and accelerate the creation of new jobs.

The Programme for a Partnership Government, published in May 2016, made a commitment to work towards achieving the tourism policy goals set for 2025 through specific measures including the retention of the 9% VAT rate on tourism related services, but this itself is dependent on prices remaining competitive in the sector.

In Budget 2017, in the weakness in sterling following the UK vote to exit the EU, it was considered prudent to retain the 9% reduced VAT rate into 2017.

In keeping with tradition, I do not propose to comment on Budget issues in advance of the forthcoming Budget.

Excise Duties

144. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if he will refrain from increasing the excise duty on alcohol and further increases on tobacco products (details supplied). [33539/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, it is a longstanding practice of the Minister for Finance not to comment, in advance of the Budget, on any tax matters that might be the subject of Budget decisions.

Carbon Tax Implementation

145. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if he will reduce the carbon tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33540/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The carbon tax is designed to treat all carbon emissions the same in order to ensure that it is fair and its application is as broad as possible to make certain its efficacy. The introduction of Carbon Tax was to send a price signal that there is a cost associated with the combustion of fossil fuels to the detriment of the environment.

Ireland is legally bound to reduce emissions by 20% on 2005 levels in 2020 and 30% on 2005 levels by 2030, as part of the European Commission's Climate and Energy Package to tackle climate change. The carbon tax was introduced as part of an overarching energy strategy and is a key tool to reduce emissions towards meeting these and other climate change commitments.

As a matter of principle the reliefs from the carbon tax are limited to ensure as wide an application as possible. Placing a carbon tax on fuels also offers an incentive to develop cleaner more efficient and environmentally friendly alternative fuels. The carbon tax is, and will continue to be, a fundamental pillar of the transition towards a decarbonised economy and society by 2050.

Mechanisms have been put in place by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment for control of supplies of solid fuel coming into the State. Regulations issued by that Department govern the marketing, sale, distribution and burning of solid fuels, require the registration of coal traders and establish higher environmental standards for coal supplied in the State compared with Northern Ireland. Compliance with those Regulations is enforced by local authorities.

VAT Registration

146. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if he will ensure that businesses are not burdened due to VAT registration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33541/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): VAT is governed by the EU VAT Directive (Council Directive 2006/112/EC), with which Irish VAT law must comply. The VAT Directive provides that VAT registration thresholds may only be raised by Member States to maintain their value in real terms, that is, they may only be increased in line with inflation. The VAT thresholds were increased to their current values, €37,500 for services and €75,000 for goods, on 1 May 2008. As the Central Statistics Office figures show that the consumer price index is below the level it reached in 2008, it is not possible to increase the VAT registration thresholds at this time. I would point out, however, that Ireland's VAT registration threshold for small enterprises supplying services is the 9th highest in the EU while the goods threshold is the third highest.

Universal Social Charge Exemptions

147. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if the 3% USC surcharge for the self employed can be removed (details supplied). [33542/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The 3% USC surcharge is payable on self-assessed income in excess of €100,000. When the USC was introduced in 2011 it was accompanied by a series of other reform measures designed to simplify the tax system and widen the tax base in order to raise the revenues required at that time.

One of these measures was the removal of the €75,000 income ceiling for employees, above which PRSI was not payable. This ceiling was removed for all employees in 2011, with the result that employees on incomes in excess of €75,000 became liable to an additional 4% charge on that portion of their income. At the same time the PRSI rate for self-assessed income earners was increased from 3% to 4%.

The 3% USC surcharge on non-PAYE income in excess of €100,000 was introduced in tandem with the removal of the PRSI ceiling of €75,000 as, in the absence of this measure, self-assessed high income earners would have benefitted when compared to their PAYE counterparts from the tax package introduced in Budget 2011. On the basis of fairness, this could not have been countenanced at the time.

With regard to equality of treatment, the Deputy will be aware that, while Employer PRSI contributions of 8.5% and 10.75% are payable in respect of employees, no similar contribution is payable by the self-employed. In addition, the self-employed also continue to benefit from a broader expense deduction regime than that available to employees.

The Government's plans to reduce the income tax burden for all taxpayers, with a particular focus on low to middle income earners, were clearly stated in the Programme for Government published in May 2016.

The Programme for Government recognises that high personal tax rates in Ireland discourage work and jobs and have a negative impact on our international competitiveness. Therefore, it contains a commitment for a medium-term income tax reform plan that keeps the tax base broad, while reducing excessive tax rates for middle income earners, and limiting the benefit for

high earners. We must appreciate the value of retaining the incentive to work, to enable those who work hard to provide for their families and generate further economic growth through employment and expenditure in the domestic economy.

Preparations for Budget 2018 are now under way. As the Deputy will be aware, changes to one particular tax, such as USC, are not considered in isolation. They must be considered as part of the overall Budget process encompassing both revenue and expenditure measures and in the context of available resources. Any announcement in relation to changes to the income tax system, including USC, would normally be made as part of the Budget and I am not inclined to diverge from this practice.

Garda Stations

148. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of Garda stations sold in the past five years and to date in 2017; the locations of each; the amount obtained for their sale; the Department or agency that oversaw the sale of the Garda stations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33179/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I am advised by the Commissioners of Public Works that the following former Garda stations have been sold by them since 2012 with a total value of €3,228,000 raised for the Exchequer.

Former Garda Station	County	Sale Amount
2014		
Inchigeela	Cork	€55,000
Mallow Road	Cork	€260,000
Lettermore	Galway	€63,000
Cloone	Leitrim	€50,000
Grangemoekler	Tipperary	€103,000
Baldwinstown	Wexford	€75,000
Newtowncashel	Longford	€50,000
Ballinure	Tipperary	€100,000
Dundrum	Tipperary	€90,000
Doon	Limerick	€50,000
Finea	Cavan	€56,000
Tullyvin	Cavan	€45,000
Kilmessan	Meath	€200,000
Longwood	Meath	€76,000
Ballymore	Westmeath	€55,000
2015		
Rathowen	Westmeath	€15,000
Meelin	Cork	€44,500
Kiltyclogher	Leitrim	€58,000
Crossakiel	Meath	€6,000
Aclare	Sligo	€40,000
Ballywilliam	Wexford	€110,000
Carrigaholt	Clare	€105,000

Former Garda Station	County	Sale Amount
2014		
Kiltealy	Wexford	€86,000
Inistioge	Kilkenny	€132,000
Johnstown	Kilkenny	€115,000
Geashill	Offaly	€123,000
Ballyragget	Kilkenny	€141,000
2016		
Ballinakill	Laois	€92,000
Lahardane	Mayo	€70,000
Ballinahowen	Westmeath	€20,000
Labasheeda	Clare	€18,500
Lauragh	Kerry	€115,000
Dromod	Leitrim	€142,000
Churchill	Donegal	€62,000
Easkey	Sligo	€65,000
Ballacolla	Laois	€15,000
Tournafolla	Limerick	€42,500
Ballyfarnon	Roscommon	€40,000
2017		
Fenit	Kerry	€110,000
Doochary	Donegal	€35,000
Menlough	Galway	€50,000
Glencolumbkille	Donegal	€47,500
Total		€3,228,000

There was no disposal of former Garda stations during 2012 and 2013.

Brexit Issues

149. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33344/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): On 2 May 2017, following the triggering of Article 50 and the adoption of the EU's negotiating directives, the Government published a position paper on Brexit. The paper reflects the stated Government priorities of minimising impact on trade and the economy; protecting the Northern Ireland Peace Process; maintaining the Common Travel Area; and influencing the future of the European Union.

Following publication of the paper, sectoral Brexit response plans are being prepared by relevant line Departments with responsibility for individual sectors with a view to mitigating emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research and analysis and consultations with stakeholders.

For my Department a key issue is the impact of Brexit on the EU-funded cross-border programmes, PEACE and INTERREG. The programmes are important drivers of regional development in a cross-border context and have allowed a range of Departments and agencies, North

and South, to support a variety of cross-border and cross-community projects.

The Government is firmly committed to the successful implementation of the programmes and to successor programmes post-2020. Last October I was able to announce that agreement had been reached with the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland on a safeguard clause to Brexit proof funding agreements with programme beneficiaries.

Now that this short term objective has been achieved, the medium term objective is to ensure successful implementation of the programmes out to 2020, through a period during which the UK is expected to leave the EU. My longer term objective is secure agreement for successor programmes post-2020. Work is underway in my Department to address these medium and long term objectives.

Ministerial Meetings

150. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has met the trade unions or employer organisations recently. [33012/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The primary point of contact with representatives of trade unions and employer organisations is through the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF). The LEEF meets on a quarterly basis with Government represented by the then Minister for Finance, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and the Minister for Jobs Enterprise and Innovation. Other Ministers attend depending on the issue and the Taoiseach chairs one meeting a year.

The last meeting was held on Thursday the 11th of May and focused on the then Minister for Social Protection's plans for pension reform. Also on the agenda was a standing update on the status of Brexit negotiations.

Outside of the formal structures of the LEEF, I meet a wide range of interest groups on an ongoing basis. In this capacity, I met with ICTU on the 27th of April and IBEC on the 18th of January.

Teaching Qualifications

151. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 117 of 5 July 2017, the appeal options a person has in view of the fact that a re-examination of their application for incremental credit has been rejected; if there is an external appeals process that is independent of his Department; his plans to reform the incremental credit scheme to include other work experiences in applications for credit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33164/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The criteria for the award of incremental credit to recognised post-primary teachers under Circular 29/2007 was agreed under the auspices of the Teachers Conciliation Council. This Council is comprised of representatives of teachers, school management, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Department of Education & Skills and is chaired by an official of the Workplace Relations Commission.

The scheme for Incremental Credit, as agreed at the Teachers Conciliation Council, makes no provision for an appeal for teaching service.

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Regarding other work experience Circular 29/2007 provides for the award of incremental credit in respect of Relevant Non-Teaching experience. Provision is also made for a process to appeal a decision by the Department to refuse an application for incremental credit under the terms of the circular in respect of Relevant Non-Teaching applications only.

Any further changes to the Circular would have to be agreed by the Teachers Conciliation Council, in the first instance.

State Examinations

152. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he will take for persons that sat their oral Irish examination without preparation for same due to industrial action in their schools at the time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33183/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Following consultation with the education partners regarding the Leaving Certificate Oral Tests in Irish (Higher/Ordinary and Foundation Levels), French, German, Italian, Spanish, Japanese and Russian, it was agreed that the tests would commence on Monday 27th March, 2017 and finish on Friday 7th April, 2017. This happened without any disruption and my department has not received any indication that the process was adversely affected by industrial action.

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 order to prepare adequately for examinations. The commitment of our teachers and schools to their students is acknowledged and appreciated in this respect.

The optional oral tests for the Junior Cycle could be taken at any time between 9th January and 10th March, 2017 and again my Department has not received any indication that the process was adversely affected by industrial action.

Residential Institutions Redress Scheme

153. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when home modifications will be carried out for a person (details supplied); if the application adviser assigned to this person's case has made contact with builders and others that would be contracted to carry out these modifications in view of an occupational therapists report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33217/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Caranua, the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board, is an independent statutory body established pursuant to the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act 2012 to oversee the use of the cash contributions of up to €110 million, pledged by the religious congregations, to support the needs of survivors of institutional child abuse. The processing of individual applications is a matter for Caranua itself and I have no role in that process. My officials have requested Caranua to examine the matter raised by the Deputy and to reply to her as soon as possible.

Education Schemes

154. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a July provision refusal for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33222/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The extended school year (or July Provision) Grant Scheme provides funding towards an extended school year for children with a severe or profound general learning disability and/or children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) enrolled in recognised schools.

The eligibility criteria for the July Provision Grant Scheme 2017 is set out in the Department's Information Note on the scheme which was published with the application forms and is available on the Department's website at www.education.ie

I understand, based on the information supplied in the application form, the student referred to by the Deputy does not qualify for the July Provision Grant Scheme 2017 as she does not have ASD and/or a severe/profound learning disability.

The Deputy will be aware that the Programme for a Partnership Government includes a commitment to examine the adequacy of current special education access and funding provision.

In addition the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Policy Advice on Educational Provision for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders was published in July 2016.

In developing this policy advice, the NCSE reviewed the Department's July Provision scheme. The NCSE consulted widely with parents, professionals and other stakeholders and interested parties while also conducting research. The Policy advice is available on the NCSE's website www.ncse.ie

The policy advice recommends that relevant stakeholders should discuss the development of a national, day activity scheme that provides a structured, safe, social environment for all students with complex special educational needs for one month of the summer holidays.

My Department has convened an Implementation Group with representatives of the NCSE, NEPS, the Inspectorate and external representatives to ensure that the Report's recommendations are fully and appropriately considered and that a timetable for implementation is prepared. The work of the Implementation Group is ongoing.

My officials will engage with officials in the Department of Social Protection, the Department of Health and other relevant stakeholders in regard to implementing the recommendations in relation to July Provision.

State Examinations

155. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the assistance given by his Department to students with dyslexia sitting the junior certificate and the leaving certificate State exams; if extra time can be given to these students sitting the exams to complete their papers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33249/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations. The Commission in this regard operates a scheme of Reasonable Accommodations in the Certificate Examinations.

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

School Staff

156. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he will take to address the fact that school secretaries do not get paid during the summer holidays in view of the fact that this situation is totally unfair and untenable for the secretaries concerned. [33270/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Schemes were initiated in 1978 and 1979 for the employment of Clerical Officers and Caretakers in primary and secondary schools. Staff employed on these schemes are paid directly by my Department and are not paid via grant funding. The 1978 and 1979 schemes are being phased out and have been superseded by a more extensive capitation grant scheme.

The majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools in the Free Education Scheme now receive capitation grant assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services. Capitation related grants are issued to the majority of primary and post-primary schools to employ such staff. Within the capitation grant schemes, it is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs.

Where a school uses the capitation grant funding to employ a secretary, such staff are employees of individual schools. My Department therefore does not have any role in determining the pay and conditions under which they are engaged. These are matters to be agreed between the staff concerned and the school authorities. My Department has no plans to develop an alternative scheme for schools to employ secretaries separate to the current system of capitation grant assistance.

Notwithstanding the above, in 2015 my Department agreed to engage with the union side in relation to the pay of school secretaries and caretakers who are employed using grant funding and to enter an arbitration process. The Arbitrator recommended a cumulative pay increase of 10% between 2016 and 2019 for school secretaries and caretakers comprehended by the terms of the arbitration process and that a minimum hourly pay rate of €13 for such staff be phased in over the period 2016 to 2019. My Department has recently published circular letter 0025/2017 for voluntary secondary schools and circular letter 0026/2017 for primary schools, setting out the application of the second phase increases of the Arbitrator's recommendations. The circulars are available at:

Circular 0025/2017: http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0025_2017.pdf

Circular 0026/2017: http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0026_2017.pdf

The increases recommended by the Arbitrator are binding and must be applied by all schools who employ staff to whom the Arbitrator's recommendation applies. The circulars issued by my Department set out the revised rates of grant funding for schools and an application process whereby schools can apply for additional funding in order to enable them to pay the revised rates set out in the circulars.

Schools Property

157. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will report on correspondence between his Department and the Congregation of Christian Brothers in relation to the sale of the pitches at a school (details supplied); the status of the sale; if he will commit to negotiating with a trust (details supplied) and Congregation of the Christian Brothers regarding the future use and ownership of the sports pitches; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33282/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that the Congregation have replied to my Department's correspondence seeking clarification on a number of points including whether the land in question is, as advised, the subject of a legally binding agreement with a home builder. In its response, the Congregation has confirmed that the position is that the lands concerned have been sold, that it has signed and exchanged legally binding contracts with the purchasers and that the congregation cannot reverse this transaction.

Third Level Charges

158. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will conduct a technical evaluation into the reduction and phasing out of the student contribution charge for third level institutions as per one of the recommendations in the Cassells report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33312/17]

159. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he is taking to determine the feasibility of the recommendation in the Cassells report that third level education be fully publicly funded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33313/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I propose to take Questions Nos. 158 and 159 together.

The report of the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education outlines three main funding options for the future funding of the higher education sector.

These options are currently being considered by the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills. The outcome of the Committee's deliberations will inform future policy decisions in this area.

Technical work will be undertaken by my Department as necessary in order to address technical issues relating to the funding options that are presented in the report of the Expert Group. However, no policy decisions will be taken in advance of the outcome of the Joint Committee's deliberations.

Special Educational Needs Data

160. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of the location of special needs assistants, in view of his recent announcement to increase numbers by 975, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33314/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy has noted, I recently announced that 975 additional SNAs will be available for allocation to schools from September 2017 which is a 7.5% increase to meet the demands for the new school year.

A total of 13,990 SNA posts will now be available at a gross annual cost of €458 million. This is more SNAs than we have ever had previously and will ensure that all children who

qualify for SNA support can continue to receive access to such support.

In total, the number of SNAs available has increased by over 32% since 2011, when 10,575 posts were available.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), which is an independent statutory agency, is responsible, through its network of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, including SNA support.

Responsibility for deciding on the quantum of educational supports and resources to be allocated to schools to support individual pupils rests with the NCSE. In making allocations to schools, the NCSE takes into account the assessed individual needs of all children with identified needs in the school.

The NCSE has advised all schools of their allocations for SNA support for the coming 2017/18 school year. Details of SNA allocations which have been made to schools are available on a county by county and individual school basis, on the NCSE website at www.ncse.ie.

Brexit Issues

161. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33337/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Following on from publication of the document setting out the Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations, work is underway across departments to prepare adaptive Sectoral Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders, and will encompass the following themes:

- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;
- Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;
- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;
- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;
- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

Adopting a proactive approach from the start, the Irish Government has been comprehensively preparing for this very eventuality. The contingency framework that the Government put in place maps the key issues that will be most important to Ireland in the coming weeks and months. My own Department contributed fully to the preparation of the education components of that framework.

It is my priority to continue to engage actively on a number of fronts in dealing with the impact of Brexit on the Education sector. Consultation has been fundamental to my Department's

preparations for Brexit. We have consulted extensively with our stakeholders. Between December and January both I and Minister of State Halligan have led consultations with stakeholders from right across the higher education, further education and training; and primary and post-primary education sectors. More recently, on the 3rd July 2017, the Tánaiste, and Minister for Enterprise and Innovation Frances Fitzgerald TD, and I co-hosted a joint stakeholder dialogue on enterprise skills needs and Brexit.

Among the key issues identified in these consultations are Brexit's likely impact on the future of the Common Travel Area and its implications for students, teachers, academic staff and researchers; mutual recognition of qualifications; our enterprise skills base; UK/Ireland research collaboration and partnerships between education institutions and enterprise; as well as the implications for EU funding for research and the impact on EU funding programmes such as Horizon2020, PEACE IV and Erasmus+.

All of these issues will be factored in to my Department's overall approach to future discussions and negotiations and our input to Government's preparations for EU-UK negotiations including the finalisation of our sectoral response plan. Both I and my Department will continue to consult with the sector interests as necessary through the period ahead.

All of this work is ongoing and must also respond to the emerging developments in the Brexit negotiations.

School Transport Eligibility

162. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the nearest school rule under the school transport scheme in order to take into account the impact this rule has on students living in rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33348/17]

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 almost 116,000 children, including some 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

The purpose of my Department's School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

This approach complements the overall Department policy which is to ensure that specific school accommodation needs for defined geographical areas are addressed in an orderly fashion.

While it is the prerogative of parents to send their children to the school of their choice, eligibility for school transport is determined by the distance they reside from their nearest school.

It is important that the terms of the School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

School Transport Eligibility

163. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the nearest school rule for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33349/17]

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 almost 116,000 children, including some 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

The purpose of my Department's School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

This approach complements the overall Department policy which is to ensure that specific school accommodation needs for defined geographical areas are addressed in an orderly fashion.

While it is the prerogative of parents to send their children to the school of their choice, eligibility for school transport is determined by the distance they reside from their nearest school.

It is important that the terms of the School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

School Transport Eligibility

164. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the school bus service from the Bunninadden Killavil area of County Sligo to a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33350/17]

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 almost 116,000 children, including some 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

The purpose of my Department's School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

Changes to the eligibility criteria for this Scheme were announced in December 2010 as part of measures contained in Budget 2011 and derived from recommendations contained in a comprehensive Value for Money review of the scheme. In general, these changes mean that children are eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

This approach complements the overall Department policy which is to ensure that specific school accommodation needs for defined geographical areas are addressed in an orderly fashion.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concession-

ary basis only which is subject to a number of conditions including the availability of spare seats on an existing service and payment of the annual charge.

It is important that the terms of the Post Primary School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

Third Level Staff

165. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether third level colleges have appropriate staffing levels; his plans to introduce a voluntary redundancy scheme in areas in which staff are deemed surplus to requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33367/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): As the Deputy may be aware, third level institutions are autonomous bodies and are responsible for the day to day management and operational affairs of the institute, including the management of its staffing requirements. My Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to the HEA designated higher education institutions and the internal disbursement of funding (both public and private) is then a matter for the individual institution.

Since the introduction of the moratorium on public sector recruitment, an Employment Control Framework (ECF) has been in place for the higher education sector which provides institutions with considerable flexibility to fill vacancies, through recruitment or promotions on the basis of meeting an overall ceiling of posts.

In Budget 2015, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform announced that the existing ECFs and associated moratoriums would be lifted and replaced with a system of delegated sanction for recruiting and promoting up to Principal Officer level, subject to adherence by Departments to binding pay ceilings and ongoing compliance with Workforce Planning requirements. My Department is currently consulting with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to identify the most appropriate staffing model for the higher education sector.

My Department does not have any plans at this time to introduce a general voluntary redundancy scheme in the third level sector. In a situation where an institute identifies staff who are surplus to requirements, it may utilise the redeployment arrangements currently in place for the public service. This issue is being kept under review.

School Transport Provision

166. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are grants or financial supports available through his Department that can be used towards the cost of school buses in circumstances in which passenger numbers have increased significantly as in a case (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33417/17]

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 almost 116,000 children, including some 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary

schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

The purpose of my Department's School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

Bus Éireann is responsible for procuring contractors to provide services for school transport purposes.

Private operators wishing to tender for school transport services should liaise with their local Bus Éireann office.

There are no direct financial supports available from my Department, for operators who wish to upgrade their vehicles.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

167. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the value of an inheritance of an asset is not regarded as reasonable income in certain cases in the assessment of a student grant; the reason the value of the asset is seen as income in other cases; if he will review this with a view to taking account of a monetary inheritance (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33424/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In calculating reckonable income under the Student Grant Scheme, the awarding authority considers income from all sources earned inside and outside the State within a specified reference period, including income from gifts and inheritance.

Article 24(6) of the Student Grant Scheme 2017 provides that gifts or inheritances received in the reference period will be included as reckonable income. This will be taken into account for one year only. Grant assistance may not be awarded in any case where the reckonable income exceeds the prescribed income limits for the award of a grant.

If any of the persons whose income is under consideration received a gift or an inheritance in the reference period, these are included in reckonable income, unless in the case of an independent student, the gift or inheritance was between the applicant and his or her spouse, civil partner or cohabitant; or in the case of a dependent student, the gift or inheritance was between parents or to the applicant from his or her parent(s).

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he 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 his/her case, an appeal may be submitted by the applicant via www.studentgrantappeals.ie outlining the position to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board within the required timeframe.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

168. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the current pupil teacher ratio in primary level schools; his plans to reduce this figure; and if he will make a state-

ment on the matter. [33440/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Budget 2017 sets out the resources available for schools in 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 in the coming school year.

Budget 2016 provided for an improvement in the staffing schedule in primary schools by 1 point, from 1 teacher for every 28 pupils to 1 teacher for every 27 pupils for the 2016/17 school year and it should be noted that the current staffing schedule of 27:1 for primary schools has restored it to the position it was at prior to the fiscal crisis. The staffing schedule for post-primary will be 19:1 for the 2017/18 school year. The allocation for guidance provision which is equivalent to 0.4:1 in the staffing schedule is being provided separately.

The 2017/18 school year will see a significant increase of over 4,800 in teacher numbers in our schools compared to the 2015/16 school year.

It is my intention to make further improvements to class sizes over the life of the Government. However, I recognize that there are needs across the system which have to be balanced in the decisions made in each Budget.

Teachers' Remuneration

169. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he is taking regarding the status of equal pay for equal work for teachers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33441/17]

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. A previous Government reduced the salaries and allowances payable to all new entrants to public service recruitment grades by 10% with effect from 1 January 2011. This decision also required that such new entrants would start on the first point of the applicable salary scale, which in the case of teachers had the effect of reducing their starting pay by a further 4-5%. Later in 2011, the Government placed a cap on the overall level of qualification allowances that could be earned by teachers.

Subsequently in 2012, following the public service-wide review of allowances, the Government withdrew qualification allowances for new teachers altogether. However, the Government partially compensated for this by deciding that new entrant teachers would henceforth commence on a new salary scale which had a starting point higher than the starting point of the old scale.

The public service agreements have allowed a programme of pay restoration for public servants to start. I have used this to negotiate substantial improvements in pay for new teachers. The agreements have, to date, restored an estimated 75% of the difference in pay for more recently recruited teachers and deliver full equality at later points in the scale. This is substantial progress and strikes an equitable balance with other claims for funding on my Department, particularly needs such as enhanced service for children with special educational needs, for disadvantaged schools, for growing schools, for Higher Education and for apprenticeships.

As a result of these changes and taking into account the proposed pay measures under the

Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, the starting salary of a new teacher from 1 October 2020 onwards will be €37,692. If full equalisation was achieved the starting salary for a post-primary teacher from 1 October 2020 would be €43,879 and for a primary teacher would be €41,511.

Further to the this newly recruited teachers benefit from the terms of the Ward circular which reduced the qualifying period for a CID and the removal of the career break and secondment categories of objective grounds which had previously prevented some teachers from gaining CIDs. In addition to earlier permanency, other measures of benefit to newly recruited teachers include a revised sequence for the filling of posts to enable fixed-term and part-time teachers to gain permanent, full-time jobs more quickly and easier than before.

It must be borne in mind that the pay reduction for post-2011 entrants to the public service applied to all public servants and not just teachers, and that any restoration of these measures in respect of teachers would be expected to be applied elsewhere across the public service. While I am not in a position to provide an estimate of the total cost of restoring all post-1 January 2011 entrants in all areas of the public service to the pre-2011 pay scale arrangements, I can say that in the case of education and training sector employees, including teachers, the estimated current full year cost would be in the order of €85 million. Clearly, the cost across the entire public service would be substantially higher.

However there are other types of equality that we must also bear in mind, for example equality between public servants and people who work elsewhere or don't work at all. It would also not be equal or fair for us to do unaffordable deals with particular groups of public servants that mean that we do not have the money left in the public purse to provide increases in social welfare payments for vulnerable groups, tax reductions for people at work, or investments in improvements in public services that people rely on.

Any further negotiation on new entrant pay is a cross sectoral issue, not just an issue for the education sector. The Government also supports the gradual, negotiated repeal of the FEMPI legislation, having due regard to the priority to improve public services and in recognition of the essential role played by public servants.

Accordingly, the recently concluded draft Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 includes a provision in relation to new entrants which states that an examination of the remaining salary scale issues in respect of post January 2011 recruits at entry grades covered by parties to the Agreement will be undertaken within 12 months of the commencement of the Agreement.

Schools Building Projects Status

170. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the school building programme at primary and second level in County Kildare continues to proceed as planned having particular regard to the urgent requirement for school places; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33493/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department's six year Capital Programme priorities building projects to meet demographic demand and this includes schools in County Kildare. The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed.

As the Deputy is aware, there are currently 29 major capital projects being progressed in County Kildare, details of which were provided to the Deputy previously. This is in addition to

the smaller scale projects that have been approved devolved funding under my Department's additional accommodation scheme. Details of these projects may be viewed on my Department's website www.education.ie which is updated regularly.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

171. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which adequate resource teachers remain available throughout all schools in north county Kildare; his plans for augmentation in specific areas of particular need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33494/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department's Circulars 0013/2017 for primary schools and 0014/2017 for post primary schools were published on 7th March 2017. These Circulars set out the details of a new model for allocating special education teachers to schools.

The revised allocation process replaces the generalised allocation process at primary and post primary school level for learning support and high incidence special educational needs, and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocation process which provided additional resource teaching supports to schools, to support pupils assessed as having Low Incidence disabilities.

The new Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school's educational profile.

Allocations based on the school profiles were issued to all schools on 7th March, including those in Co. Kildare.

The aim of this new model is to deliver better outcomes for children with special educational needs. Substantial research, analysis, consultation with service users and stakeholders, and piloting have gone in to the development of this model and all of the evidence points to the fact that this new system will deliver better outcomes for children.

No school will lose supports as a result of the implementation of the new model. In addition, no school will receive an allocation, for the support of pupils with complex needs, less than the allocation they received to support such pupils during the 2016/17 school year.

An additional 900 teaching posts have been provided to support the introduction of this new allocation model. The provision of an additional 900 teaching posts is a very significant investment in the provision of additional teaching support for pupils with special educational needs in our schools. This is additional to an increase of 41% in the number of resource teachers allocated to schools annually by the NCSE since 2011.

The additional funding will provide additional supports to over 1200 schools who are identified as needing additional supports as a result of the new model. Supports for children with special educational needs is a key priority for this Government. The new funding will ensure that all schools receive a sufficient allocation of special education needs resources to provide additional teaching support to all pupils, including pupils who have yet to enrol in their school, who require such support.

Guidelines for schools on the organisation, deployment and use of their special education teachers to address the need of pupils with special educational needs have also now been pub-

lished.

The Guidelines will support schools to reflect on how they can review and manage their timetabling practices to ensure the timetable is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of all pupils in their school who have special needs. The Guidelines encourage schools to ensure they deploy their resources appropriately to meet the needs of all of the children in their school who require additional teaching support.

Gaelcholáistí Issues

172. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress to date in respect of the provision of a gaelcholáiste to serve the area of County Kildare in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33495/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Maynooth Community College opened in 2014 with an Irish-medium Aonad and it was stated that should the Aonad demonstrate sufficient viability after four years from its date of establishment, a Gaelcholáiste would be established, in a partnership patronage model between Kildare and Wicklow ETB and An Foras Pátrúnachta.

As part of the Major School Building Projects announcement in November 2015 and in view of the continued support for an independent Gaelcholáiste, it was confirmed that a Gaelcholáiste to serve the North Kildare area will open in 2019, subject to the continued viability of the Irish-medium Aonad at Maynooth Community College.

I understand that a range of issues relating to the opening of the school referred to by the Deputy are matters for discussion between Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board and An Foras Pátrúnachta. My Department will continue to work closely with Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board and An Foras Pátrúnachta in relation to the provision of appropriate accommodation for the establishment of the school to which the Deputy refers.

Schools Building Projects Status

173. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress in regard to the provision of the twin school project at Moyglare Road, Maynooth, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33496/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the project to which he refers is on site. The contract has a twenty-four month duration. The project is expected to be completed in early 2019.

Youthreach Programme Review

174. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 140 of 12 April 2017, if a contract to carry out the independent review of Youthreach has been appointed; if so, the details of the appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33511/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Goal 4 of the Further Education and Training Strategy commits SOLAS to organise and conduct

a schedule of evaluations of Further Education and Training programmes, including the Youthreach programme.

In April SOLAS arranged for the publication of the request for tender (RFT) for the Youthreach evaluation on the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) eTenders procurement website. Tenders received did not meet with all of the specifications and as a result it was not possible to award a contract for the evaluation.

The RFT for the contract was re-published on eTenders last month and the process is ongoing.

Third Level Institutions

175. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the terms of the agreement made between the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) or DIT Foundation and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin regarding the use of St. Laurence's church in Grangegorman. [33525/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Higher education institutions such as Dublin Institute of Technology are autonomous bodies and are responsible for the day to day operations of the Institute including the use of buildings, procurement of goods and services, and provision of services for students.

Property Ownership

176. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the person or body that has legal ownership of St. Laurence's Church in Grangegorman. [33526/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The ownership of St Laurence's currently rests with the Grangegorman Development Agency (GDA) until such time as the campus is fully developed at which point it will revert to DIT. However, in line with the arrangements in place between the GDA and DIT, DIT is fully responsible for the operation of that building.

Electoral Divisions Establishment

177. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the townlands and electoral divisions within the Carpenterstown, Castleknock and Blanchardstown West school planning areas respectively, in tabular form. [33527/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In order to plan for school provision and analyse relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas. I wish to advise the Deputy that a townland or electoral division can fall into more than one school planning area.

The information requested by the Deputy is set out below in tabular form.

School Planning Area	Electoral Divisions	Townlands
Carpenterstown_D15	Lucan North	Allenswood

School Planning Area	Electoral Divisions	Townlands
	Castleknock-Knockmaroon (Partial)	St Catherine's Park
		Coldblow
		Westmanstown (ED Lucan)
		Woodlands
		Broomfield
		Annfield
		Passifyoucan (Partial)
		Barnhill (Partial)
		Barberstown (Partial)
		Clonsilla (Partial)
		Kellystown (Partial)
		Porterstown (Partial)
		Diswellstone (Partial)
		Sheepmoor (Partial)
		Carpenterstown (Partial)
		Blanchardstown (Partial)
		Astagob (ED Clonsilla) (Partial)
		Laraghcon (Partial)
Castleknock_D15	Castleknock-Knockmaroon (Partial)	Castleknock
	Castleknock-Park	Ashtown
		Astagob (ED Castleknock)
		Astagob (ED Clonsilla) (Partial)
		Porterstown (Partial)
		Diswellstone (Partial)
Blanchardstown_West_D15	Blanchardstown-Blakestown (Partial)	Hansfield or Phibblestown
		Passifyoucan (Partial)
		Barnhill (Partial)
		Barberstown (Partial)
		Closilla (Partial)
		Hartstown (Partial)
		Castaheany (Partial)
		Damastown (Partial)
		Littlepace (Partial)
		Huntstown (Partial)

Teacher Recruitment

178. Deputy Thomas Byrne asked the Minister for Education and Skills the legal status of

diocesan panels in respect of teacher employment; if reviews of same have taken place; and his plans for reform. [33535/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The recruitment and appointment of teachers to fill teaching posts is a matter for individual school authorities, in accordance with the 1998 Education Act.

The core function of the redeployment arrangements at Primary level is to facilitate the redeployment of all surplus full-time permanent/CID holding teachers to schools that have vacancies. The redeployment of all surplus permanent/CID holding teachers is key to the Department's ability to manage within its payroll budget and ceiling on teacher numbers.

Thereafter, vacancies are filled from the Supplementary panel which is created for eligible primary teachers in fixed-term/temporary positions (this includes substitute positions) and in part-time positions who meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

The redeployment arrangements are reviewed annually with the relevant education partners to determine what adjustment, if any, is required for subsequent school years. Redeployment panels are drawn up on a diocesan basis for Catholic panels, diocesan/united diocesan basis for Church of Ireland panels and on a national basis for An Foras Pátrúnachta, Educate Together and for the Special National Panel.

The redeployment arrangements are published on my Departments website and operate in the same way for all Patron bodies.

Special Educational Needs

179. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of children whose parents have been forced to decline an early intervention class due to the distance from home involved. [33536/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is the body responsible for organising and planning provision for children with Special Educational Needs, including establishing ASD early intervention classes and special classes in mainstream primary and post primary schools.

There are currently 126 Early Intervention classes for children with ASD in recognised primary and special schools. Early Intervention classes are supported with a pupil-teacher ratio of 6:1 and also have Special Needs Assistant support normally amounting to 2 SNAs for a class of 6 children.

From the age of three children with autism (who will not reach the age of 6 during the current school year) can enrol in these early intervention settings. Where such a placement is not available home tuition can be provided.

The enrolment of a child to a school is a matter, in the first instance, for the parents/guardians of the child and the Board of Management of a school.

However, parents/guardians who may need advice or are experiencing difficulties in locating a school placement should contact their local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) who can assist in identifying an appropriate educational placement for their child. Contact details are available on www.ncse.ie.

The SENO can also advise parents in relation to supports which may be available to support

children with special educational needs, including special transport arrangements which may be made available.

The Deputy may be aware that the Department of Children and Youth Affairs provides supports for childcare, including pre-school education.

The principal vehicle for the delivery of pre-school education is the free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme which was introduced in January 2010 and provides for early learning in a formal setting to children in the year before they commence primary school.

Children with disabilities have access to pre-school services under a new Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) programme of supports, which was announced in June 2016, by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

AIM is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, depending on the needs of the child and the pre-school.

The supports include:

- A new Inclusion Charter for the Early Years sector, alongside updated and strengthened Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education.

- In relation to the qualifications of early years practitioners, a new higher education programme for early years practitioners (LINC) commenced in September 2016.

- A new national specialist service which is based in the Better Start National Early Years Quality Development Service will provide expert advice, mentoring and support to pre-school providers from a team of 50 specialists in early years care and education for children with disabilities.

- A new national scheme will provide specialised equipment, appliances and minor alterations which are necessary to support a child's participation in the ECCE programme.

- A new national scheme will also provide additional capitation to pre-school providers where this is critical to fund extra support in the classroom and enable a child's participation in pre-school.

Details of the supports which are available under AIM can be found at www.preschoolaccess.ie which contains comprehensive information on the access and inclusion model and on how to apply for the new schemes and supports. For children attending a private pre-school through the ECCE programme, questions relating to the AIM supports should be addressed to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

My Department does not collect or retain information on the number of children who are not enrolled in early intervention classes for any reason. Where parents decide not to seek such placements or where such placements are available but the option to enrol is not exercised by a parent, the decision is a matter for the parent/s in the first instance.

Schools Building Projects Status

180. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the development of a new school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33559/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department recently received additional information in respect of the proposed project for the school referred to.

My Department is currently considering the information and will be in further contact with the school shortly.

Schools Building Projects Status

181. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a development at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33560/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, the project for the school referred to, is included in my Department's six year Construction Programme.

My Department has recently received a request for changes to the proposed project, which is currently under consideration. My Department will be in contact with the school authorities on the matter shortly.

Languages Programme

182. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for the inclusion of the Polish language into the secondary school syllabus from junior cycle upwards, in view of the increase in Polish speaking persons and the growing importance of the language; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33562/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In 2015 the Framework for Junior Cycle was published and along with it provision for the delivery of short courses upon implementation of Junior Cycle. New subject specifications for Junior Cycle are being implemented on a phased basis, with Modern Languages being introduced from September 2017.

A short course in Polish has been developed and is being piloted in four schools in 2017 as part of the new Junior Cycle. This course is in addition to short courses developed in Chinese Language and Culture, and Irish Sign Language.

In Senior Cycle there are a number of languages available, in addition to French, German, Spanish and Italian Russian, Japanese and Arabic which are available in the Leaving Certificate examination. For students whose mother tongue is an EU language other than those listed above, they can present for examination in a non-curricular EU language. In 2016 candidates presented in some sixteen EU Languages.

Under the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 my Department is developing a new Foreign Languages in Education Strategy and as I previously announced, as part of the goals in this strategy, curricular specifications at Leaving Certificate, starting with Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese as heritage languages with accompanying Leaving Certificate examinations will be developed. These specifications would replace the existing Leaving Certificate non-curricular examinations in these languages.

It would be hoped with the emphasis that will be placed on foreign languages, following the publication of the strategy, that more students will study these languages and that the diversity

of languages studied will be greater.

School Transport Eligibility

183. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether the fact that the ethos condition in the post primary school transport scheme refers to religious minorities constitutes discrimination against other minorities such as those with no religious faith wishing to attend an Educate Together secondary school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33565/17]

184. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a record is kept of the religion of the students qualifying for the post primary school transport scheme to attend minority religious faith schools; if so, if he will provide these figures. [33566/17]

185. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will ensure that Educate Together secondary schools qualify for the post primary school transport scheme on the same basis as minority religious faith schools in view of the fact that these schools are mostly chosen by those not wishing to avail of a school that is of the main religious ethos here. [33567/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 183 to 185, inclusive, together.

School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

Currently almost 116,000 children, including some 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

The purpose of my Department's School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

Under the terms of my Department's Post Primary School Transport Scheme children are eligible for school transport where they reside not less than 4.8 kilometres from and are attending their nearest education centre as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

In relation to school transport provision, ethos relates to religious ethos and is in the context of provision for minority religions.

While it is the prerogative of parents to choose the school that they wish their children to attend, eligibility for school transport is determined by the distance that children reside from their nearest school.

The detailed information requested by the Deputy is not captured by Bus Éireann during the application process.

The terms of the School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

Departmental Expenditure

186. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount spent by his Department on hosting receptions in each of the years 2012 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33285/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade regularly hosts a wide range of promotional events both at home and abroad aimed at increasing Ireland's international profile, promoting Irish trade, economic and cultural interests, developing our network and influence and advancing our national interests. These events can take many forms and include events with a business, trade, cultural or Irish community focus.

Events held outside the State are largely funded from Promotion and Outreach budgets managed by individual diplomatic missions, while promotional events and State hospitality by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade within Ireland are primarily funded from the Protocol Division of the Department.

The Department's financial management system does not separately record the cost of hosting receptions within the system. Therefore the information extracted is in summary form and reflects promotional expenditure and outreach expenditure incurred by the Department. In respect of promotional events held outside of the State, the Department records these events and associated expenditure according to the purpose of the event (i.e. trade promotion, networking) rather than by their format (i.e. hosting reception). The Department recently revised its system of classification and with effect from 1 January 2017 all Promotion and Outreach expenditure by overseas missions must be linked to at least one of the Department's five high level goals: Our People, Our Values, Our Prosperity, Our Place in Europe and Our Influence. This ensures a focus on why activity is undertaken rather than on where it took place or the nature of the activity (e.g. reception, dinner). These new arrangements ensure a closer link between the related expenditure and the Department's Statement of Strategy and Mission Business Plans. They are designed to enable Missions to plan and proactively pursue delivery of the Department's High Level Goals. These new arrangements which are being piloted in 2017 will be reviewed and revised for 2018.

Total expenditure by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on events to promote Ireland's interests, at home and abroad, since 2012 and to date in 2017 is as follows:

	Expenditure abroad €'000	Expenditure in Ire- land €'000*	Total€'000
2012	1,820	7	1,827
2013	2,166	24	2,130
2014	1,852	16	1,868
2015	1,963	21	1,984
2016	2,033	27	2,060
(to end June)	1,545	11	1,556

*26 counties.

Departmental Expenditure

187. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount spent by his Department on wine in each of the years 2012 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33286/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Protocol Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade regularly purchases refreshments, including wines, for use in official hospitality, events to promote Ireland and its interests and in pursuit of the Department's High Level Goals. At all times every effort is made to ensure value for money in such purchases.

The total amount expended on wines from the Protocol Budget of the Department between 2012 and to date in 2017 is set out in the table.

Year	Total expenditure €
2012	7872
2013	1205
2014	3384
2015	7149
2016	10,438
2017*	5805

*to date.

Brexit Issues

188. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide an update on his responsibilities as they pertain to Brexit; if he expects these responsibilities to increase; the division of tasks as they relate to Brexit between the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33301/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): In appointing me as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, the Taoiseach has asked me to coordinate the whole-of-Government approach to the EU-UK negotiations and to preparations for Brexit, with a view to securing the best possible outcome for Ireland. Coming shortly before the formal launch of the Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK on 19 June, my appointment to this role has coincided with an important period in the Brexit process.

My immediate focus has therefore been on discharging the Department's lead role in ensuring a cross-Governmental approach to the Article 50 negotiations. I will be building on the excellent work carried out over recent months, which has ensured that Ireland's interests – as set out in the Government's comprehensive document of 2 May on our approach to the Brexit negotiations – have been fully reflected in the EU's negotiating position. Protecting the gains of the peace process is a key priority for the Government in dealing with Brexit. This includes ensuring that all provisions of the Good Friday Agreement are fully respected and upheld, avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland and maintaining the Common Travel Area.

In order to ensure that these specific concerns are recognised, the Government has also undertaken an intensive campaign of engagement with our EU partners and the EU Institutions. This approach has delivered for Ireland and I look forward to continuing the efforts of my predecessor in this regard. I have already held bilateral meetings with a number of my EU colleagues since assuming my new responsibilities, including with the EU's lead negotiator, Michel Barnier, as well with my French and Slovak counterparts during visits to Paris and Bratislava on 5 July and 7 July respectively while on 3 July I welcomed my Finnish counterpart to Ireland when I brought on a visit to the border. In addition, I met the UK's Secretary of State

for Exiting the EU, David Davis, in London on 6 July and I have spoken by telephone with the UK's Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson.

I will normally represent Ireland at the General Affairs Council (Art. 50). The GAC (Art. 50) will have a key role to play in providing political oversight of the Article 50 negotiations as they proceed and in preparing the work of the European Council (Art. 50), where Ireland is represented by the Taoiseach.

The European Union Division in my Department is headed by a Second Secretary General with a particular focus on Brexit issues, and has been strengthened by the appointment of an Assistant Secretary to work with him. He oversees a dedicated six-person unit on the EU-UK negotiations in the Division. The EU Division works closely with the Department's Ireland, UK and Americas Division, Legal Division and Trade Division, which also deal with aspects of Brexit. The resources for these Divisions have also been reinforced. Specific additional senior diplomatic posts have also been assigned to our Embassies in London, Berlin and Paris as well as the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the European Union in Brussels, while reporting on Brexit issues is a top priority for all our EU Missions. There is daily coordination with the Department of the Taoiseach, which serves the Taoiseach as a member of the European Council. There is also close engagement with other Government Departments and their "Brexit" teams.

The precise operational arrangements for co-operation between Departments are being reviewed in the light of my Ministerial remit.

Brexit will also have implications for a broad range of policy areas that fall under the responsibility of my Department. We have cooperated closely with the UK within the EU on a number of these important areas, including in the areas of foreign and development policy as well as in economic and trade policy. A key priority for my Department is therefore to build on our partnerships with the remaining EU Member States and develop new alliances within the EU and engage more proactively with the EU institutions. This work is already underway. Discussions with EU partners have revealed that they too are very mindful of the need to intensify alliances post-Brexit and are also looking at how best to do so.

We have already seen the implications that Brexit has had for our consular and passport services. There has been a marked increase in demand for passports and citizenship via foreign birth registration from applicants in Northern Ireland and Great Britain. In this regard, the Passport Service in Dublin, Cork and London as well as Consular Division have recruited a number of additional temporary and fulltime officers to meet increased Passport and Foreign Birth Registration demands including increased demand as a result of Brexit.

It is also the Government's objective to exploit fully any opportunities arising from the UK's decision to leave the EU and my Department, in collaboration with other Government Departments and State Agencies, is working to support Irish businesses to identify new opportunities for their products and services by diversifying into new markets as well as intensifying efforts in existing markets. The work is being taken forward through the Export Trade Council which I chair.

Brexit Issues

189. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33340/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Following the publi-

cation on 2 May of the comprehensive document setting out the Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations, which drew on the findings of sectoral dialogues held to date in the framework of the Civic Dialogue, work is underway across Government to prepare adaptive Sectoral Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders, and will encompass the following themes:

- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;
- Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;
- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;
- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;
- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

Although not directly responsible for any one Sectoral Response Plan, my Department and I will have a key role to play in working with other Ministers and Departments to identify how to mitigate sectoral challenges that are identified across Government.

My Department has lead responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government approach to the EU-UK negotiations and it will continue to work closely with all Departments in this context to work towards ensuring that Ireland's priorities – including in relation to sectoral issues – are appropriately reflected in the EU's negotiating position as the process evolves.

I and my officials are also continuing an intensive programme of engagement with our EU partners. The aim is to ensure a firm understanding of Ireland's unique concerns and also to identify areas where we share common priorities with Member States, both in relation to Brexit and also with regard to the wider EU agenda.

My Department also has a wider role and responsibility with regard to promoting Ireland internationally. This will only increase in importance across the range of our sectoral interests, especially where mitigating measures foresee a diversification of trade and investment patterns, particularly in markets and regions where awareness of Ireland may be less developed than in our longer established markets.

To this end, my Department, in collaboration with other Government Departments and State Agencies, is working to support Irish businesses to identify new opportunities for their products and services by diversifying into new markets as well as intensifying efforts in existing markets. The work is being taken forward through the Export Trade Council which I chair.

Diplomatic Representation

190. **Deputy Noel Greally** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to establish an embassy in Georgia with full services to enhance trade and other links between Ireland and Georgia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33352/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The configuration and

scale of the State's diplomatic network is kept under ongoing review by the Government. The Government is of course conscious of the political, economic, trade and other factors that might warrant the opening of a resident diplomatic mission in a number of countries. However, resource constraints do not allow us to have resident representation in all the locations that might objectively justify it having regard to those factors. At present, Ireland's bilateral relationship with Georgia is sustained and promoted on a concurrent basis through our embassy in Sofia.

EU Migration Crisis

191. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the challenges Italy has with the increased numbers of immigrants from Libya and African countries; and if the EU will assist more [32471/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Italy and Greece have for the past two years been at the centre of the EU migration crisis. Following the deal agreed between EU Heads of State and Government and Turkey in March 2016 the migration pressure moved from Greece to Italy. More than 85,000 people have risked the Mediterranean crossing to reach Italy so far this year, a 20% increase over the same period in 2016, according to figures from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). At least 2,150 others have died trying. The vast majority of migrants are arriving via Libya. Most migrants are coming from sub-Saharan Africa. According to UN High Commission for Refugees, the top two nationalities arriving in Italy by sea in 2016 were Nigerians (21%) and Eritreans (11%).

Italy is experiencing increasing difficulties trying to manage this influx of people and recently threatened to close its ports to rescue ships operated by humanitarian groups that were not flying the Italian flag unless they received more help from other EU members.

Earlier this month the European Commission announced an action plan to help Italy cope with the Central Mediterranean influx.

The plan *inter alia* calls on EU ministers to approve:

- €46m to help Libya strengthen border controls and tackle the smuggling gangs
- €35m more for Italy to step up processing of migrants and returns of failed asylum seekers
- The stepping up of work with African countries, including Mali and Niger, to stem the flow of migrants.

The Commission has called on Italy to introduce a Code of Conduct **for NGOs** carrying out search and rescue activities in the Mediterranean. It said that the proposal was being made because their activities might be a "pull factor" encouraging people to risk their lives in flimsy dinghies in the hope of being picked up and then ferried over to Italy.

The Commission also called on Italy to show greater flexibility on security checks arranged bilaterally with other Member States allowing migrants to be relocated from Italy more speedily.

The June European Council agreed to step up coordination and delivery on all the elements contained in the Malta Declaration, the Partnership Framework and the Joint Valletta Action Plan, underpinned by sufficient financial resources. This would involve continued and enhanced cooperation with countries of origin and transit, including strengthening regional cooperation in Search and Rescue activities. The European Council said that training and equipping the Libyan

Coast Guard was a key component of the EU approach and promised to speed it up.

Meanwhile the Interior ministers of France, Germany and Italy along with the European Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs, met in Paris on 2 July and agreed, *inter alia*, to enhance support to the Libyan coastguard by increasing training activities and providing additional financial support while at the same time ensuring close monitoring of activities and to provide additional support to the IOM and the UNHCR to enable facilities in Libya to reach international standards in terms of living conditions and human rights. They also agreed that the EU Relocation scheme agreed in 2015. Progress in its implementation has encountered various difficulties and has been very slow.

Ministerial Meetings

192. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when he plans to meet with representatives of the UUP, the SDLP and the Alliance Party. [32895/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I began my engagement with all parties in Northern Ireland immediately upon being appointed to the role of Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade. Since 19 June I have represented the Government at the talks' process in Belfast to support the formation of an Executive and as part of this process I have engaged with all the political parties, including the SDLP, UUP, and Alliance Party. I will continue to do so in the period ahead.

Significant progress has been made in the talks, although a number of key issues remain to be resolved. Notwithstanding the challenge of the remaining issues to be resolved, I believe that an agreement can be reached – an agreement that would allow a power-sharing Executive to be formed on a sustainable basis. All parties are committed to the successful operation of all of the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement and everyone agrees that devolution is the best way to deliver for all of the people of Northern Ireland.

The Governments can support and encourage but, in the final analysis, it is only the parties themselves that can make an agreement with each other. All sides may now wish to reflect on how progress can best be made. I have encouraged all parties to maintain dialogue with each other over the coming weeks.

The Government will spare no effort in fulfilling its solemn duty as co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement and this includes working to ensure the effective operation of all of its institutions. We will continue to work to this end with the British Government to support and facilitate the parties in their efforts to reach agreement on formation of a new Executive. The Government wishes to see this achieved as soon as possible.

Brexit Issues

193. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to his comments on designated special status for Northern Ireland in the context of Brexit, if this special status includes maintaining ongoing sectoral linkages on a sector by sector basis (details supplied) wherein it is practicable. [30850/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Protecting the Northern Ireland peace process is one of the Government's priorities in the Brexit negotiations. The Government's focus in relation to Northern Ireland is the substantive outcome to the key issues.

The Government's objectives in the withdrawal negotiations are well-known: to secure the avoidance of a hard border, respect for the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement, continued EU engagement in Northern Ireland and the protection of the unique status of Irish citizens in Northern Ireland.

As a result of intensive political and diplomatic engagement by the Government, our EU partners and the EU institutions are fully aware and supportive of the importance of respecting the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts and protecting the gains of the peace process. The European Council's guidelines for the EU-UK negotiations include a strong acknowledgment of the unique circumstances of the island of Ireland and explicitly recognize the importance of preserving the achievements, benefits and commitments of the Good Friday Agreement. These guidelines are fully reflected in the negotiating directives adopted by the General Affairs Council on 22 May.

The inclusion of the specific references to Ireland's key priorities in the EU negotiating guidelines highlights their acceptance by our EU partners as shared priorities for the European Union in the negotiation process with the UK. The Government is under no illusions about the challenge and complexity of these negotiations and is engaged in detailed and ongoing planning in order to prepare for them.

North/South cooperation is ever more crucial in the context of Brexit and work in this area will continue. The North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) has had a strong Brexit focus in the past year in working to identify impacts, opportunities and contingencies for the island, arising from the UK's departure from the EU. In November 2016, the NSMC agreed to a number of common principles to guide future work on Brexit. I look forward to this work continuing in greater depth and detail once agreement is reached to form a new Northern Ireland Executive.

The All-Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit is a critical part of the Government's engagement with sectors which will be impacted by the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Over 1,200 delegates have participated in two plenary sessions and numerous sectoral dialogues, facilitating a wide conversation on the implications of Brexit for the island, North and South. Through this process the Government has heard and taken on board a broad range of concerns which have informed the Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations. This has been a very valuable initiative and is continuing.

The Government will maintain its focus on the pursuit of specific, effective and realizable measures that address each of the issues of concern under Brexit to ensure that the gains of the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement are not in any way undermined by the UK's exit from the EU and to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland.

Brexit Issues

194. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views of the citizenship proposals put forward by Prime Minister May in a policy paper (details supplied). [32101/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Safeguarding the rights and entitlements of EU citizens resident in the UK as well as UK citizens resident in the EU has been identified as a key priority by both the European Union and the UK within the context of the Article 50 negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. As set out in the comprehensive document published on 2 May entitled *Ireland and the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the European Union*, the Government believes that an agreement

on the rights of citizens should be wide, ambitious and comprehensive. I am satisfied that the Guidelines for the negotiations adopted by the European Council (Art. 50) on 29 April and the more detailed negotiating directives agreed by the General Affairs Council (Art. 50) on 22 May fully reflect Ireland's approach in this regard. The EU's position has been formally conveyed to the UK by way of a position paper, which was published on 12 June and presented in detail to the UK side during the first round of negotiations on 19 June. It is positive that the UK Government has now published its approach to the issue in a paper entitled *Safeguarding the position of EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals in the EU*.

Ireland, along with its EU27 partners, is currently studying the detail of the UK paper, which will be discussed between the EU and the UK as part of the work stream on citizens' rights under the Article 50 process. The next round of negotiations is scheduled to take place on 17 July. While clearly there are differences between the two sides' proposals, I am hopeful that progress can be made as quickly as possible so that certainty can be provided early in the withdrawal process on this issue, which impacts directly upon the lives and livelihoods of over 4 million people.

In addition to working with our EU27 partners in advocating an ambitious agreement on citizens' rights, the Government is continuing to work closely with the European Commission Taskforce and the UK with a view to maintaining the Common Travel Area, which provides reciprocal rights for Irish people living and working in the UK and British citizens living in Ireland.

The importance of the continuation of bilateral arrangements and agreements between Ireland and the UK, including the CTA, has been recognised by the EU in the European Council Guidelines of 29 April and the negotiating directives of 22 May and this has been further reflected in the EU's position paper on citizens' rights. Similarly, the UK has noted that its proposals on citizens' rights are without prejudice to the Common Travel Area.

Foreign Conflicts

195. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the efforts being made to address the refugee crisis in Syria and Iraq; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33503/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Syria have forced millions of people to flee their homes. In Syria alone, an estimated 6.3 million people are internally displaced, while a further 5 million people have fled to neighbouring countries, including Iraq. Inside Iraq, a further 3.1 million people have been displaced through the conflict there. The levels of humanitarian need in the region are unprecedented, presenting enormous challenges to the international community and in particular to neighbouring countries which are struggling to host large numbers of refugees.

Ireland has supported the people of Syria since the conflict began in 2012 with more than €76 million in humanitarian assistance. By the end of 2017, I would expect that we will have provided close to €100m. Our support provides life-saving assistance to people caught in the conflict inside Syria and also to Syrians who have fled to neighbouring countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

We have also provided over €8 million in humanitarian support to the people of Iraq since 2014. This includes €2 million released earlier this year to the UN Humanitarian Fund, which

directs funding to partners best placed to provide assistance to those who need it most. Even as the conflict in Iraq eases, millions of Iraqis will still require significant humanitarian assistance while the difficult task of rebuilding their communities begins.

In addition, since 2012, Ireland has also deployed 50 members of its Rapid Response Corps to work with UN organisations working on the crises in Iraq and Syria.

A core focus of Ireland's humanitarian assistance in the region is to provide the means to rebuild livelihoods and ensure that children can return to school while displaced from their home communities.

Ireland also contributes to the needs of refugees in the Middle East region through the EU and UN responses. In March, the EU announced €42.5 million in additional humanitarian support for Iraq, bringing EU humanitarian assistance in Iraq to over €309 million since 2015.

We continue to monitor the situation in Syria and Iraq closely, and are preparing a further release of funds to Syria in the coming weeks.

International Terrorism

196. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the extent to which he and his European Union and United Nations colleagues continue to address the threat of international terrorism; if particular initiatives are likely with a view to protecting persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33504/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The increase in terrorist attacks in Europe in recent months has highlighted once again the need to address the diverse threat posed by terrorism. The EU is working to strengthen its response to international terrorism through multilateral cooperation, political dialogue and concrete support to third countries. EU Foreign Ministers remain focused on implementation of the recent Council Conclusions on Counter-terrorism agreed last month and on the contribution that the EU can make through external action to preventing and countering terrorism. Engagement with third countries to prevent violent extremism and to strengthen their capacity to detect and prevent terrorism, in full compliance with international law and human right, remains at the core of the EU's strategy. The EU has also placed considerable emphasis on strengthening cooperation with its immediate neighbours in the Western Balkans, Turkey and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries through dedicated political dialogue and the cultivation of effective counter-terrorism partnerships.

Ireland supports the comprehensive approach being taken at EU level to preventing and countering terrorism as well as the need to address the underlying factors that contribute to this threat. It is crucial that our response in this area effectively addresses the dangers of violent extremism and radicalisation, especially online content.

The European Council has also expressed its support for practical cooperation and coordination between the EU and the United Nations in the area of counter-terrorism and has welcomed the UN Secretary General's proposal to establish an Office for Counter-Terrorism.

The former UN Secretary General's comprehensive *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, presented in January 2016, and his related reports are an important and welcome contribution to addressing the threat posed by international terrorism, and to highlighting the need to examine drivers of violent extremism through dialogue and conflict prevention, strengthening governance and the rule of law, gender equality and empowering women, community en-

gagement and youth empowerment, and education and skills development.

Two areas which Ireland has highlighted in particular are the effects of violent extremism on Youth and Women, and their role in countering such extremism. Ireland was strongly supportive of the adoption last year by the Security Council of Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. This Resolution confirmed that inclusion and participation by young people must lie at the core of efforts by the international community to respond to crises and conflict.

Women, Peace and Security is also a key element in the fight against violent extremism. Ireland has long been a supporter of the full implementation of Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security and its successor Resolutions. Women can have an important role to play in helping to counter radicalisation and extremism in their families and communities, and also have the potential to be radicalised themselves. Therefore effective Countering Violent Extremism strategies must take cognisance of the particular situation and perspectives of women and girls into consideration.

Ireland continues to work closely through the EU, the UN, and with other partners to counter and prevent terrorism. It is vital that we intensify our efforts to work with our partners in this area to build our capacity to challenge the threat posed by terrorism.

EU Issues

197. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the extent to which particular emphasis is placed on efforts within the European Union to address the issue of euroscepticism; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33505/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The issue of euroscepticism is not new but in recent years it has become stronger and more vocal. That is why this year in the Rome Declaration of 25 March, the leaders of the 27 Member States and of the EU Institutions pledged ‘to listen and respond to the concerns expressed by our citizens’ and committed to offering citizens ‘both security and new opportunities’. In this regard, a key priority for the Government is to ensure that the EU is delivering practical improvements to the lives of citizens through policies to promote jobs and growth and in addressing internal and external challenges such as migration and international terrorism.

The European Commission’s recent White Paper on the Future of Europe addresses the challenges that Europe is facing and presents five scenarios for how the Union could evolve by 2025. Its open and non-prescriptive approach is welcome and is in keeping with the need to renew the EU’s engagement with its citizens. My Department will support and foster dialogue and debate by civil society and the general public on the issues raised in the White Paper and the five Reflection Papers which have followed from it.

There is a now growing sense that the EU has come out of a period of crisis and is moving forward, despite Brexit. The election of President Macron, the setback suffered by populist parties in certain recent European elections and the return of economic growth have contributed towards this feeling. It is important that we carry forward this sense of optimism into the debate on the future of the EU and continue to work together to shape an EU which puts the citizen at the heart of the EU agenda.

Consular Services Provision

198. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the extent to which he and his Department continue to support a person (details supplied) detained in Egypt; if it is expected that a breakthrough will be achieved resulting in his release or return here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33507/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government is continuing to work very hard on this Irish citizen's behalf, and this case remains the top consular priority of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Very significant resources continue to be deployed to support this citizen and his family. The trial in which he is a defendant was back in court twice in the past week – on 4 July and again on 9 July - for further hearings. Our Embassy team was in the court to observe the proceedings, as they have been at every hearing in the case.

The latest hearings saw further progress in the case. The last of the prosecution witnesses have now been called. The judge, at the request of the defence lawyers, has agreed that the next hearing, scheduled for 16 July, will be devoted to a critical examination of the video evidence which the prosecution side has presented.

Our understanding is that the defence lawyers, including our Irish citizen's representative, will soon have their opportunity to present their case on behalf of their clients.

I had a telephone conversation on 9 July with my Egyptian counterpart, Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. I underlined in the strongest possible terms the Government's position on this case and our determination to see our citizen back in Ireland with his family as soon as possible. I will be continuing to look at the case in detail, and engaging with key relevant parties, including representatives of the Egyptian Government at all appropriate levels.

I can assure the Deputy that the Government will be continuing to work day-in and day-out to secure this individual's return to Ireland at the earliest possible moment. This is our objective, and we are working relentlessly in order to achieve that outcome.

EU Enlargement

199. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the extent to which the EU remains focused on the issues affecting the western Balkans with particular reference to the need to ensure the future of the democratic process and compliance with the *acquis communautaire*; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33508/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The stability of the countries of the Western Balkans continues to be a priority for the European Union. The region is currently facing many challenges, and internal political difficulties are frequently compounded by the impact of external influences. On 9 March, the European Council reaffirmed its unequivocal support for the European perspective of the region and stressed the importance of the states concerned continuing on the reform path, having good neighbourly relations with each other, and further developing inclusive regional cooperation initiatives.

High Representative Mogherini further underlined the EU's commitment to the enlargement process at the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) Summit, held in Dubrovnik on 30 June, when she emphasized that the region is facing many of the same challenges as Europe as a whole.

The EU will also be present at the Trieste Summit on 12 July when the leaders of the countries of the Western Balkans will reiterate their commitment to the reform processes required for accession to the EU, and will discuss practical aspects of regional co-operation aimed at

bringing about tangible benefits to of the citizens of the region, including on the economy and infrastructure.

Ireland is a strong supporter of enlargement, viewing it as a transformative driver for stability and peace, and supports all efforts to enhance regional relationships and institutional reform.

Diplomatic Representation

200. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the specific task the new special envoy to the United States of America will enjoy; if there will be a formal delegation order made following assignment of the role; the Department that is the parent line for the role; and if a budget allocation is to be made to support the role. [32141/17]

201. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has informed the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress of the appointment of a new special envoy to the United States. [32142/17]

202. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has informed the American administration of the appointment of a new special envoy to the United States. [32143/17]

203. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the resources from Ireland's embassy and consulates in the United States that will be provided for the new special envoy announced recently. [32144/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 200 to 203, inclusive, together.

The Taoiseach has appointed Deputy John Deasy as a Government envoy to the US Congress to work on the issue of the undocumented Irish in the United States. While Deputy Deasy will work under my overall direction and that of the Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development, Ciarán Cannon, TD, there will no requirement for a formal delegation order. I have already spoken with Deputy Deasy in regard to Government priorities in this area, and to explore how the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade can best support him in this new role. The Secretary General of my Department, Niall Burgess, has also had follow up contact with Deputy Deasy regarding his appointment.

In meeting the challenges of this new role, Deputy Deasy will work closely with and be supported by the incoming Ambassador of Ireland to the United States, Dan Mulhall, as well as the Embassy of Ireland in Washington, DC, and our Consulates across the United States. Our Embassy and Consulates continue to monitor issues regarding immigration reform in the United States on a continuing basis. They also work very closely with Irish immigration centres in the United States in providing support to Irish immigrants in the US, including members of the undocumented community.

Ireland's diplomatic network in the US is therefore very well placed to provide logistical and policy support to Deputy Deasy in the area of immigration reform. As the Taoiseach has indicated, Deputy Deasy will not be provided with any additional remuneration for this role. His travel and subsistence expenses, which are expected to be modest, will be covered from within the existing resources of my Department.

Deputy Deasy has extensive experience of working in the US Congress, including engaging on immigration reform legislation. He will bring that valuable experience and his network of

contacts within the US system to augment the extensive efforts already undertaken by the Government and the Embassy in Washington, DC, as well as our Consulates, to assist the plight of the undocumented Irish in the US.

It is expected that Deputy Deasy will travel to the United States at an early date and the relevant US authorities will be appropriately advised of his appointment in advance of that visit.

Property Services Regulatory Authority

204. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the anomalies that exist in the Property Services (Regulation) Act 2011 whereby the rigors of the legislation do not apply to firms that have no operation in the jurisdiction here but still allows them to sell property here; his plans to amend this legislation and remove this paragraph relieving agents from another jurisdiction from adhering to local laws and regulation and also allowing them all the benefits of participating in the market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33267/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Property Services Regulatory Authority (PSRA) was formally established on 3 April 2012, pursuant to the Property Services (Regulation) Act 2011. One of the main statutory functions of the PSRA is the licensing of Property Service Providers, i.e. auctioneers, estate agents, letting agents and property management agents. The Authority is independent in exercising its statutory functions.

Part 11 and Schedule 7 of the 2011 Act relate to property services provided by certain persons from EU Member States referred to in the legislation as ‘relevant persons’. Section 82 of the 2011 Act details a ‘relevant person’ as one who holds from an EU competent authority a licence or other form of authorisation authorising that person to provide a property service similar to the definition provided for in the Act; is subject to a scheme of protection in respect of client accounts that substantially corresponds to the provisions of Part 5 of the Act; proposes to provide or is providing a corresponding property service in the State; and is not prohibited under the Act from providing the corresponding property service. The requirement to allow ‘relevant persons’ to provide property services in the State without a licence from the Property Services Regulatory Authority arises from our obligations under the EU Services Directive 2006/123/EC.

The European Commission has recently communicated that it has concerns about certain provisions of the Property Services (Regulation) Act 2011 which may contravene aspects of the Services Directive 2006/123/EC. These concern the provision of property services by persons other than ‘relevant persons’ who are permitted to provide property services in their own jurisdictions without a requirement to hold a relevant licence or authorisation. In the light of this concern and in consultation with the Attorney General’s Office, my Department is examining whether changes may need to be made in future to certain provisions of the current legislation.

Garda Operations

205. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 707 of 31 January 2017, the progress which has been made in achieving a 10% increase in the Garda Traffic Corps; the efforts and resources that have gone towards greater enforcement of traffic law to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33457/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): An Garda Síochána's Roads Policing Operations Plan 2017 incorporates a programme of high visibility road safety and enforcement operations, carried out in partnership with other state agencies. Garda operations specifically target road use behaviour known to contribute significantly to collisions, including driving while intoxicated, speeding and the use of mobile phones. By working together with the Road Safety Authority and other agencies, An Garda Síochána will continue to confront dangerous road-user behaviour through public presence, legislative enforcement, education and partnership.

The Commissioner has committed in her Policing Plan for 2017 to increase incrementally the number of personnel dedicated to traffic duties by 10% to support better outcomes in relation to road traffic enforcement. It is envisaged that the planned increase will be achieved in the second part of this year as newly attested Gardaí come on stream, freeing up resources for assignment to traffic policing.

I am informed that a proposal in respect of the reconfiguration of the Traffic Corps is currently being developed. It is anticipated that the reconfiguration will be completed before the end of 2017. An Garda Síochána also indicated that it was intended to have a stronger focus on road traffic enforcement in the training provided to new recruits at Templemore.

The Deputy will appreciate that I have no direct role in the enforcement of road traffic legislation, which is an operational matter for the Garda Commissioner. I am informed that road traffic legislation is enforced as part of the day-to-day duties of members of An Garda Síochána, as well as through a programme of high visibility road safety and enforcement operations, carried out in partnership with other state agencies. Garda operations specifically target road use behaviour known to contribute significantly to collisions, including use of a mobile phone. Both strategic, targeted operations and general methods of enforcement have a valuable role to play in An Garda Síochána's road traffic 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) sets out key strategic objectives for road policing which will inform and guide An Garda Síochána's road policing plans over the next 5 years. Under the Programme, the Commissioner will undertake a number of road safety traffic enforcement initiatives, including expanding the use of technology and increasing checkpoints. The Programme is being supported by significant Government investment of some €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, in Garda ICT infrastructure over the period 2016 to 2021. This major investment will allow An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in the fight against crime.

Underpinning all of these measures is the Government's ongoing commitment 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. The Government plans 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. This year, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan which is in train within An Garda Síochána. Approximately 300 appointments will also be made to the Garda Reserve.

Garda Deployment

206. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of

gardaí in each Garda station in north Cork as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32851/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 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 have been informed that the number of Gardaí assigned to the Cork North Division on the 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 311 with 16 Garda Reserves and 29 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, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau 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 to 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

This plan is progressing apace. I am informed by the Commissioner, since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, that almost 1,200 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 10 of whom were assigned to the Cork North Division. I am also informed that a further four hundred Garda recruits are scheduled to attest later this year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - an increase of 500 since the end of 2016.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Cork North Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

For the Deputy's information I have set out below, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of Gardaí assigned to the Cork North Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

CORK NORTH DIVISION 31 MAY 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
FERMOY	BALLYNOE	1
	CASTLETOWNROCHE	2
	FERMOY	57
	KILDORRERY	1
	KILWORTH	1
	MITCHELSTOWN	19
	RATHCORMAC	1
	WATERGRASSHILL	2
	TOTAL	84
	MALLOW	BUTTEVANT
CHARLEVILLE		20
DONERAILE		2
GLANTAINE		1
KANTURK		22
LISCARROLL		1
MALLOW		58
MILFORD		2
NEWMARKET		2
TOTAL		109
MIDDLETON	BALLYCOTTON	1
	CARRIGTWOHILL	2
	CLOYNE	1
	COBH	37
	KILLEAGH	1
	MIDDLETON	52
	WHITEGATE	1
	YOUGHAL	23
TOTAL	118	
CORK NORTH TOTAL		311

Traveller Community

207. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the funding his Department allocated in 2015, 2016 and to date in 2017 to Traveller specific initiatives and Traveller organisations around the country and specifically in County Wexford; if he has satisfied himself with the level of support his Department currently provides to cultural and heritage projects for the Traveller community; his plans to increase it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27358/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The total funding available to my Department in respect of Traveller and Roma initiatives for 2017 is €3,230,000, of which €1,350,000, in respect of funding for 14 Traveller community groups and national-level NGOs, transferred to my Department from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government on 1 January 2016. This was in addition to a sum of €550,000 which transferred to my Department from the Department of Social Protection (for

7 Special Initiative for Travellers projects) on 1 January 2015. My Department provided funding of €864,188 in 2015 and €2,103,830 in 2016 for Traveller specific initiatives. Details of the funding allocation in the years in question are set out in the Table below. Please note that the funding outlined for 2017 is up to current date.

As in previous years, my Department has made funding available to Traveller Interagency Groups and Community Groups for activities around Traveller Pride Week in 2017. Funding, averaging about €2,000 for each approved project, is available for suitable projects which celebrate Traveller Culture in local communities. The flagship event of Traveller Pride Week, the Traveller Pride Awards, is also sponsored by my Department. As the Deputy will be aware, my Department has led a comprehensive consultation process to develop the new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, which I launched on 13 June 2017, to improve the situation for Travellers and Roma in Ireland. The new strategy includes actions in relation to cultural and heritage projects for the Traveller community. This is a positive step forward and demonstrates both the Government's and my Department's commitment to supporting the Traveller community nationwide. Insofar as additional resources may be necessary for implementation of the new Inclusion Strategy, this is a matter for the relevant Departments as part of the annual Estimates process. I was successful in securing an additional €1 million for my own Department's work in this regard for 2017 and I will seek further resources as the need arises in future years.

My Department has an advisory group in place. The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy Steering Group was set up in 2015 after a review of existing Traveller and Roma consultation structures by my Department to monitor and assess the implementation of the Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy and is in line with the EU Framework for the Implementation of Roma Integration Strategies.

		2015		2016		2017
	Cost	Agency	Cost	Agency	Cost	Agency
Carlow	€2,000	St. Cath-erines Community Services Centre	€2,000	Carlow Traveller Interagency Group		
Cavan	€2,090	Cavan Traveller Interagen-cy Group				
Clare	€38,071	Congress Info. & Opportuni-ty Centre, Clare	€26,962	Congress Info. & Opportu-nity Centre, Clare	€27,758	Congress Info. & Opportu-nity Centre, Clare
	€8,000	Ennis CDP	€12,000	Ennis CDP		
	€2,000	Clare Traveller Interagen-cy Group	€11,055	Minceirs Whiden	€35,132	Minceirs Whiden

		2015		2016		2017
	Cost	Agency	Cost	Agency	Cost	Agency
	€3,000	Clare Traveller Interagency Group	€2,000	Clare Traveller Interagency Group		
Cork	€44,453	First EmployAbility Services Cork	€33,735	First EmployAbility Services Cork	€23,505	First EmployAbility Services Cork
	€4,237	Cork City Traveller Interagency Group	€4,000	Cork City Traveller Interagency Group		
	€1,460	Cork County Traveller Interagency Group	€1,850	Cork County Traveller Interagency Group		
Donegal	€46,757	Donegal Local Development Co	€51,390	Donegal Local Development Co	€12,909	Donegal Local Development Co
	€2,000	Donegal Local Development Co	€88,460	Donegal Travellers Project	€43,230	Donegal Travellers Project
Dublin	€8,000	Traveller Counselling Service	€46,650	Traveller Counselling Service		Traveller Counselling Service
	€28,664	Pavee Point	€104,514	Pavee Point	€56,282	Pavee Point
	€5,550	South Dublin County Council	€2,352	South Dublin County Council		South Dublin County Council
	€1,835	Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group	€114,602	Irish Traveller Movement	€101,432	Irish Traveller Movement

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		2015		2016		2017
	Cost	Agency	Cost	Agency	Cost	Agency
	€2,250	St. Margarets Traveller Community Assoc.	€89,552	National Traveller Womens Forum	€44,997	National Traveller Womens Forum
	€2,010	Ballyfermot Travellers	€129,809	Clondalkin Traveller Development Group	€69,905	Clondalkin Traveller Development Group
			€45,000	Musicantia	€42,873	Ballyfermot Travellers
			€81,780	Tallaght Travellers	€44,677	Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group
			€87,746	Ballyfermot Travellers	€33,060	St. Margarets Traveller Community Assoc.
			€89,534	Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group	€41,453	Travact
			€66,121	St. Margarets Traveller Community Assoc.	€39,935	Tallaght Travellers
			€82,907	Travact		
Galway	€34,739	Galway and Roscommon ETB	€30,653	Galway and Roscommon ETB	€11,593	Galway and Roscommon ETB
	€2,000	Galway Traveller Movement	€99,287	Galway Traveller Movement	€48,643	Galway Traveller Movement
Kerry	€66,825	Employability Service Kerry	€70,150	Employability Service Kerry	€35,573	Employability Service Kerry
	€1,015	Kerry Traveller Interagency Group				

		2015		2016		2017
	Cost	Agency	Cost	Agency	Cost	Agency
Laois						
Limerick						
Longford	€2,000	Longford Primary Healthcare Project				
Mayo			€2,000	Mayo Traveller Interagency Group		
Meath	€55,306	Jobmatters Employ-Ability Service Meath	€46,068	Jobmatters Employ-Ability Service Meath	€14,053	Jobmatters Employ-Ability Service Meath
	€2,000	Meath Traveller Interagency Group	€124,420	Meath Travellers Group	€61,210	Meath Travellers Group
Offaly	€1,000,000	Midlands Traveller Conflict Mediation Service	€110,000	Midlands Traveller Conflict Mediation Service	€100,000	Midlands Traveller Conflict Mediation Service
	€1,700	Offaly Traveller Movement	€84,748	Offaly Traveller Movement	€41,374	Offaly Traveller Movement
	€800	Birr Travellers	€800	Birr Travellers		
Roscommon	€2,000	Roscommon Traveller Interagency Group				
Sligo	€30,940	Sligo Leader Partnership	€19,734	Sligo Leader Partnership	€12,815	Sligo Leader Partnership

Questions - Written Answers

		2015		2016		2017
	Cost	Agency	Cost	Agency	Cost	Agency
	€2,000	Sligo Traveller Interagency Group				
Tipperary	€2,000	Nth. Tipperary Leader Partnership	€91,410	Tipperary Rural Traveller Project	€45,705	Tipperary Rural Traveller Project
	€2,000	Tipperary Rural Traveller Project				
Waterford	€9,720	Ucasadh	€32,000	Ucasadh		
	€3,750	Waterford Development Project	€3,049	Waterford Traveller Interagency Group	€41,291	Waterford Traveller Community Development
			€82,583	Waterford Traveller Community Development		
Westmeath	€1,249	Westmeath Traveller Interagency Group				
Wexford			€1,940	Ferns Diocesan Youth Service		
Wicklow	€1,680	Bray Travellers	€87,444	Bray Travellers CDP	€42,882	Bray Travellers CDP
	€1,980	Wicklow Travellers	€80,655	Wicklow Travellers	€39,827	Wicklow Travellers
Total	€1,426,081		€2,140,960		€1,112,114	

Work Permits Data

208. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of renew-

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als which have been issued in 2017 of the atypical worker permit for non-EU migrant fishing crew. [28071/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the Atypical Working Scheme for Seafishers commenced in February 2016.

Since the scheme commenced almost 190 atypical working permissions were granted. Of these, 68 permissions have been renewed in 2017 to date, with a further 9 awaiting processing.

Garda Data

209. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each garda station in County Westmeath as of 30 June 2017; and the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014. [32878/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

Last Thursday, 6 July, a class of 198 Garda trainees attested as members of An Garda Síochána - the largest class to attest since the Garda College reopened in September 2014. This brings the number of new recruits who have attested since the College reopened to almost 1,200, with another four hundred scheduled to attest later this year. This will bring Garda numbers to 13,500 by year-end once projected retirements are taken into account - an increase of 500 over last year. This is real progress on reaching our target of 15,000 members by 2021.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Westmeath Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 Commissioner that 27 newly attested Gardaí have been assigned to the Westmeath Division since the College reopened.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the number of gardaí assigned to the Westmeath Division by station as of 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

WESTMEATH DIVISION 31 MAY 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
ATHLONE	ATHLONE	75
	BALLYMORE	1
	GLASSON	2
	KILBEGGAN	2
	MOATE	14
	TOTAL	94
	MULLINGAR	BALLYNACARGY
CASTLEPOLLARD		3
DELVIN		9
KILLUCAN		3
KINNEGAD		4
MULLINGAR		144
MULTYFARNHAM		1
ROCHFORTBRIDGE		4
TOTAL		170
WESTMEATH TOTAL:		

Garda Stations

210. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if Garda stations in counties Longford and Westmeath which were closed or downgraded in recent years will be reopened or reviewed. [33017/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources available to An Garda Síochána and I, as Minister, have no role in the matter. This includes responsibility for the formulation of proposals in relation to the opening and closing of Garda Stations, taking into account crime trends and policing priorities, so as to ensure that the best possible use is made of these resources.

Indeed, this was the basis on which the Garda District and Station Rationalisation Programme was developed and implemented, resulting in the closure of some 139 Garda stations. I am informed by the Garda authorities that the closures have allowed front line Garda to be managed and deployed with greater mobility, greater flexibility and in a more focused fashion particularly with regard to various targeted police operations.

Under the Programme for a Partnership Government, the Government is committed to launching a pilot scheme to reopen 6 Garda stations, both urban and rural, to determine possible positive impacts that such openings will have on criminal activity, with special emphasis on burglaries, theft and public order. At its meeting on 13 June 2017, the Government noted the Garda Commissioner's interim Report which analysed population and crime trends and, taking account of the availability of stations for reuse, makes a number of recommendations including that Stepside Station in Co. Dublin be reopened on a pilot basis. The Report also indicates that the Commissioner is likely, subject to further analysis, to recommend the reopening of Lough-

linbridge, Co. Carlow and Donard, Co. Wicklow in her final report. If a second station is to be reopened in Dublin, the Commissioner has indicated that, subject to further analysis, the former station at Rush, Co. Dublin will be recommended for reopening.

The Government has, accordingly, agreed in principle to the reopening of Stepside Garda Station on a pilot basis as soon as any necessary preparatory works have been completed and the Commissioner's final recommendation in relation to Rush, Leighlinbridge and Donard Stations is expected to be received shortly.

Following any decision to reopen the former stations, the Garda authorities will work closely with the Office of Public Works in relation to any necessary preparatory works required to progress the reopenings.

The Deputy will be aware that the Garda Síochána Inspectorate is, at the request of the Policing Authority, examining the dispersal and use of resources available to An Garda Síochána in the delivery of policing services to local communities with a view to making 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.

It is expected that the Inspectorate will have completed the review by mid-2018.

Wards of Court

211. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff allocated to the Wards of Court office; and the job title of each. [33166/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the High Court has jurisdiction in wards of court matters 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.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that the number of staff in the Wards of Court Office is 21 as follows:

- 1 Principal Officer - Registrar
- 1 Principal Officer - Assistant Registrar
- 10 Assistant Principal Officers - Case Officers
- 2 Higher Executive Officers
- 4 Executive Officers
- 3 Clerical Officers

Stardust Fire

212. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if, in recognition and acknowledgement of the long campaign for justice for the victims of the Stardust tragedy, he will sanction payment for the most recent report carried out on behalf of the families of the victims; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33225/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the Government agreed to appoint Judge McCartan to assess any new and updated evidence uncovered by the Stardust Relatives and Victims Committee in order to recommend whether a Commission of Investigation should be established into the Stardust Tragedy of 1981. Judge McCartan was appointed on 7 March 2017 and officially commenced his role on 27 March.

The assessment process is being conducted completely independently of Government and the scope of the assessment process is outlined in the Dáil Motion of 26 January 2017.

Judge McCartan has discretion to afford the Stardust Relatives and Victims Committee whatever representation he believes is necessary in order for the Committee to present its evidence to the assessment process, in line with *per diem* rates for solicitors, junior Counsel and Senior Counsel respectively as agreed by the Government.

The Department has received a fee note from Judge McCartan on 10 July 2017 in respect of fees concerning the submission of the Stardust Relatives and Victims Committee's Report to him on 6 July 2017. This payment is currently being processed.

Crime Investigation

213. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to a number of knife attacks on transgender sex workers in recent months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33233/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am, of course, aware of the attacks referred to by the Deputy and I condemn all forms of knife-related violence unreservedly.

I am advised that An Garda Síochána is addressing the issue of knife crime through education and engagement with community initiatives. At an operational level, An Garda Síochána proactively target public disorder and anti-social behaviour, including knife related crime through the strategic deployment of Garda resources, and areas identified as public order hot-spots by local Garda management are the subject of additional foot and mobile patrols. Community Gardaí, in particular in the DMR, have used focus groups to discuss issues surrounding knife crime and the dangers associated with same. An Garda Síochána tackle knife crime through a tiered approach, by way of a rigorous enforcement policy, education programme and awareness raising campaigns. District Detective Units also monitor vendors engaged in the sale of knives.

I am further advised that An Garda Síochána is currently developing a national anti-knife, awareness-raising, crime-prevention initiative, for delivery to coincide with the Winter-Time 'Operation Thor' initiatives and Halloween which is traditionally a high knife crime period. In addition, Detective Units and Divisional Crime Task Forces may be utilised to provide a high visibility presence in areas such as late night bars, clubs etc, particularly when people are exiting, to deter and detect anti-social behaviour and possible altercations.

I would like to assure the Deputy that there are mechanisms in place to deal with hate mo-

tivated crime. Where a criminal offence such as assault is committed against a person based on their race, religion, colour, ethnicity, gender or some other ground, the offence is prosecuted through the wider criminal law. It is also accepted that such an offence is more serious on account of the hate or prejudice motivating the crime and Irish courts do consider evidence of a crime being motivated by hate or prejudice as an aggravating factor at sentencing.

More broadly, my Department is aware of the discrimination that transgender and intersex people face in society and in employment as has published proposals for amendments to the Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 206 to make explicit a prohibition of such discrimination in employment and in the provision of goods and services. My Department will also commence work later this year on the development of an LGBTI Inclusion Strategy which will address issues relevant to LGBTI people generally, including transgender and intersex people.

Garda Data

214. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí per station in each station in each of the years 2012 to 2016, in tabular form; the number of additional gardaí deployed to each station each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33307/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 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 informed by the Garda Commissioner that on 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are currently available, the strength of An Garda Síochána was 13,137 members.

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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

This plan is progressing apace. I am informed by the Commissioner, since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, that almost 1,200 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am also informed that a further four hundred Garda recruits are scheduled to attest later this year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - an increase of 500 since the end of 2016.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to

allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

I have received the information requested by the Deputy from the Commissioner set out in spreadsheets which I will forward directly to the Deputy.

Brexit Issues

215. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33343/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, on 2 May 2017, the Government published a comprehensive document which sets out the approach of the Government to the Brexit negotiations, following the successful campaign to have key Irish issues recognised in the EU negotiation position.

Following on from the publication of this document, work is underway across Departments to prepare adaptive Sectoral Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders, and will encompass the following themes:

- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;
- Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;
- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;
- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising; and
- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

All of this work is ongoing and must also respond to the emerging developments in the Brexit negotiations. There is no decision as yet on publication dates.

Work is continuing in my Department on the analysis of the justice specific issues arising in response to the UK withdrawal from the EU. Weekly progress reports are provided to the Department's Management Board on the analysis and preparations underway and there is ongoing engagement with other relevant Departments concerning the cross Government aspects of these issues.

Garda Divisional Headquarters

216. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on the progress on the construction of a new Garda regional and divisional headquarters in Galway city; the date on which it will be operational; the timeframe between the first gardaí moving in and the building being fully operational; the cost of the new facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33354/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close co-operation with the Office of Public Works, which has the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation, and I, as Minister, have no direct role in these matters.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that the construction of the new Regional and Divisional Headquarters for Galway, on a site in Murrough, commenced in October 2015 and it is anticipated, at this point, that the project will be completed in early 2018.

Garda management are liaising with the OPW on an ongoing basis in relation to the hand-over of the new premises for use by An Garda Síochána with a view to the station being operational as close to the completion date as possible. The cost of the new building will be in the region of €25 million excluding VAT and contingency.

Garda Divisional Headquarters

217. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí that will be assigned to the new regional and divisional headquarters in Galway city, by rank and including civilian staff; the number of extra gardaí of all ranks that will be based in the city once the new headquarters and the existing station at Mill Street are operational. [33355/17]

218. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the functions that will be carried out from the existing Mill Street station in Galway city once the new regional and divisional headquarters opens; the number of gardaí and other staff that will be based there; the future opening times of the existing station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33356/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 217 and 218 together.

As the Deputy will be aware the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close cooperation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), which has the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation. The Garda Commissioner has responsibility for the day to day operation of An Garda Síochána and the allocation of personnel and resources and I, as Minister, have no role in these matters.

I have, however, been advised by the Garda authorities that the construction of the new regional and divisional headquarters is progressing well and it is anticipated that the project will be completed in Q4 2017. Garda management will be making arrangements with the OPW in relation to the hand over of the new Garda station with a view to the new station being operational as close to the completion date as possible.

I have been further advised by the Garda authorities that Mill Street Garda station will be

retained as a fully functioning District Headquarters when the new premises are completed. While it is not possible at this time to indicate the specific nature of the resources that will operate from Mill Street, local senior Garda management will ensure that an effective policing service will be provided in the area.

Immigration Controls

219. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an appointment to renew the appropriate stamp can be facilitated at Leixlip Garda station in the case of a person (details supplied) who are anxious to keep their status up to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33365/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that registration for people living outside Dublin City and County is a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

In the case of the individual referred to by the Deputy, they must apply to Leixlip Garda Station for renewal of their appropriate Stamp status.

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.

Immigration Controls

220. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an appointment to renew Stamp 4 can be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied) at Leixlip Garda station; if the correct procedure to regularise both can be indicated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33366/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that registration for people living outside Dublin City and County is a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

In the case of the individual referred to by the Deputy, they must apply to Leixlip Garda Station for renewal of their Stamp 4 status.

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 Stations

221. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the timeframe

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for the reopening a Garda station (details supplied); the number of gardaí that will be based there; the number of hours and days per week the station will be opened; if this information is not available, when these decisions will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33421/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources available to An Garda Síochána, and I, as Minister have no role in the matter.

The Deputy will be aware that, at its meeting on 13 June, the Government agreed to note the key recommendations in the Commissioner's interim report in relation to the proposed reopening of former Garda stations and agreed in principle to the reopening of Stepside Garda station on a pilot basis as soon as any necessary preparatory works have been completed.

I understand that the Garda authorities are liaising with the Office of Public Works in relation to these preparatory works. The question of staffing and opening hours for the station will be matters to be settled by the Commissioner in due course when the relevant works have been completed.

DNA Database

222. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of samples from persons that are on the national DNA database to date in 2017 since its establishment; the number of convictions secured based on the use of evidence from the database; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33469/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Forensic Science Ireland (FSI) is responsible for the operation of the national DNA Database System. The database constitutes a major intelligence resource for the investigation of crime. The database is being populated with samples taken from persons suspected/convicted of serious crime and from crime scenes and the number of person samples added since the establishment of the database is 13,486.

I am advised by FSI that the DNA Database is not programmed in such a way as to establish the number of convictions secured as a result of evidence gained by the database. However, I am informed that, in 2016 the DNA Database identified 428 hits, which directly assisted 625 cases. Furthermore, FSI reports that 23 out of every 100 crime scene samples uploaded onto the database, will be linked to a person. The crime solving capacity of the database is expected to grow as the database grows in size and will continue to provide An Garda Síochána with a source of high quality intelligence that facilitates better targeted criminal investigations.

Charities Regulation

223. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the increase that has been made to the staff in the Charities Regulators Office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33470/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Charities Regulatory Authority ('Charities Regulator') was established on 16 October 2014 pursuant to the Charities Act 2009. It is Ireland's statutory regulator for charitable organisations and is an independent regulatory agency under the aegis of my Department. Its mission is to regulate the charity sec-

tor in the public interest to ensure compliance with the law and to support best practice in the governance, management and administration of charities.

On establishment day (i.e. on 16 October 2014) there were 10 staff assigned to the Regulator. Staff headcount increased to 18 at end 2015 and to 30 at end 2016. The current staff count in the Charities Regulator is 37. However the Regulator was provided with funding to reach a staffing of 50 in the course of 2017 and my Department is committed to working with the CRA to achieve its full approved staffing complement of 50 as soon as possible.

Garda Station Closures

224. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number and location of Garda stations scheduled to be reopened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33471/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources available to An Garda Síochána, and I, as Minister have no role in the matter.

The Deputy will be aware that, on 24 June 2016, the Government authorised the then Minister to request the Garda Commissioner, while fully cognisant of her statutory functions, to identify 6 stations 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.

On 13 June 2017, the Government considered the second interim report of the Garda Commissioner in relation to the exercise. The Commissioner, having analysed population and crime trends and taking account of the availability of former Garda stations for reuse, makes a number of recommendations including that Stepside Garda station should be reopened on a pilot basis as soon as any necessary preparatory works have been completed. The Report also indicates that the Commissioner is likely, subject to further analysis, to recommend the reopening of Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow and Donard, Co. Wicklow in her final report. If a second station is to be reopened in Dublin, the Commissioner has indicated that, subject to further analysis, the former station at Rush, Co. Dublin will be recommended for reopening.

International Terrorism

225. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which An Garda Síochána has the necessary personnel, equipment and organisational capacity to withstand a terrorist attack; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33472/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The level of threat of a terrorist attack here is kept under constant and active review by the Garda authorities. The Deputy will understand that it is not possible to go into the detail of the security measures in place in this regard. However, I can assure the Deputy that the authorities here will continue to take all necessary and appropriate measures to counteract the threat.

An Garda Síochána has in place appropriate operational measures to prevent and to respond to terrorist incidents in terms of intelligence, a well-trained and equipped special intervention capability and other national support resources, including armed support. The considerable operational skills and resources of the Defence Forces are also available where needed. Addi-

tional resources were provided in the Garda Vote last year that included a dedicated allocation of funding for combating the threat from international terrorism. This is being used in respect of certain additional training, operational equipment and personnel requirements.

The establishment of the Armed Response Unit for the Dublin region is a key investment in enhancing the armed response capacity for critical incidents and in freeing up and supporting the specialist capacity of the ERU. The resources requirements and allocations in this regard are being kept under active review.

The long-standing and progressive community relations programme that the Gardaí operate in respect of their interactions with minority communities is a key element of seeking to combat the potential for radicalisation in our Muslim community. That interaction will continue and be enhanced, aimed at protecting the community and addressing any concerns or vulnerable individuals who may be identified.

There is a very significant programme of investment ongoing to enhance the information resources available to the Garda Authorities, including access to the EU's Schengen Information System and the development of dedicated border security information systems to process passenger information.

The Garda authorities also work very closely with their EU and other international counterparts in taking measures to counteract what is a shared threat. As might be anticipated, there is a particularly close relationship with counterparts in Britain and Northern Ireland in this regard in taking measures to address this threat.

Gangland Crime

226. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of criminal gang members incarcerated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33473/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that a report compiled by the Irish Prison Service identified 12 criminal gangs within the prison population excluding the subversive groupings in Portlaoise Prison. It is not possible to provide definitive numbers in relation to those gang affiliations within the prison system. Prisoners upon committal seldom state their allegiance to any criminal organisation. Membership/allegiance of these criminal gangs fluctuates on a continuous basis with some persons breaking links and others becoming affiliated.

The emergence in recent years of criminal gangs has had significant implications for the management of Irish prisons. Rivalries and feuds which develop on the outside continue inside of prison. Prison management must ensure that the various factions are kept apart and, as far as possible, that gang members do not have influence over other inmates in the prisons or criminal activities on the outside.

A number of initiatives have been introduced with a view to preventing identified gang leaders from conducting criminal activities while in custody and also to prevent them exerting inappropriate influence over other persons. For example, the security initiatives undertaken by the Operational Security Group have made it more difficult for prisoners to engage in illegal activities while in prison. These initiatives include the installation of airport style security including scanners and x-ray machines. Core functions of this group include gathering and collating intelligence information on criminal gang members in custody, carrying out intelligence led searches and preventing the flow of contraband, including mobile phones, into the prisons.

In addition, there is regular contact between the Prison Service and An Garda Síochána to discuss security issues including the operation of criminal gangs. Gardaí are also provided with reports detailing the release dates of this category of prisoner.

Garda Strength

227. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which he expects Garda strength to increase over the next four years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33474/17]

230. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the strength of An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33477/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 227 and 230 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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.

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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that on 31 May 2017, the latest date for which figures are currently available, the strength of An Garda Síochána was 13,137. Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 2,400 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next three years in addition to the 2,000 recruited that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014.

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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves. I am engaging with my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, in relation to ensuring funding is available to allow sufficient recruitment into An Garda Síochána in 2018 and the coming years so that the planned overall Garda workforce of 21,000 is achieved.

This plan is progressing apace. I am informed by the Commissioner, since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, that almost 1,200 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am also informed that a further four hundred Garda recruits are scheduled to attest later this year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - an increase of 500 since the end of 2016.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced

in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

Policing Issues

228. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the degree to which An Garda Síochána continues to liaise with Europol and Interpol in tracking criminal and drug dealing gangs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33475/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can assure the Deputy that targeting organised crime activity and those involved is an ongoing priority for the Government and An Garda Síochána.

An Garda Síochána is tackling such activity through a range of targeted measures designed to disrupt and dismantle the operations of criminal organisations.

This involves targeting serious criminals and organised criminal groups on a number of fronts and across all geographical locations, including through the use of focused intelligence led operations by Garda specialist units including the Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau, the National Economic Crime Bureau and the National Bureau of Criminal Investigations and supported, as required, by the Security and Intelligence Section. These specialist units also work closely with the Criminal Assets Bureau in targeting persons involved in such criminality.

All of these units operate under the umbrella of An Garda Síochána's Special Crimes Operations Unit and are continuing to achieve commendable successes in targeting criminal groups as well as the ongoing drugs and firearms seized.

The Deputy will also be aware of the very significant measures which have been introduced in response to the appalling gangland feuding activity which has manifested itself both here and abroad. These measures include the provision of significant additional resources to An Garda Síochána, strengthened legislative measures targeting the proceeds of crime, the establishment of a dedicated Garda Armed Support Unit in Dublin and the establishment of a new Garda Special Crime Task Force.

The Divisional Drug Units liaise closely with the Garda National Drugs & Organised Crime Bureau, the Revenue Commissioners and the Defence Forces (Navy). The Garda Síochána also work in partnership with other Law Enforcement Agencies at home and abroad, including the Revenue Commissioners (Customs Service), the Health Products Regulatory Authority, Police Service of Northern Ireland, the National Crime Agency (UK), Europol, Interpol and the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre – Narcotics (MAOC-N).

More broadly, work is well under way in regards to a comprehensive and integrated new National Drugs Strategy for the period post 2016 and the Garda Síochána remains resolute in

its determination to act against those within society who pose a significant threat to the welfare and well-being of our citizens and the communities we serve. The continued disruption of the supply of all illicit drugs remains a priority for all agencies tasked with responsibilities in this regard.

The Garda authorities and the Government are absolutely determined that Irish criminals will not escape justice by fleeing this jurisdiction or by seeking to conduct their criminal activities from abroad. Recent operational activities involving An Garda Síochána and their Spanish colleagues clearly demonstrates the close liaison An Garda Síochána has in place with other law enforcement agencies internationally.

Garda Equipment

229. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which the communications system in the various Garda stations throughout the country is adequately updated and upgraded to ensure an immediate response to members of the public; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33476/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda equipment and resources, including ICT, are a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

The Deputy will be aware that the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 is intended to professionalise, modernise and renew An Garda Síochána to ensure that the organisation can meet present and future challenges. I am informed by the Garda authorities that the Programme prioritises ICT projects with the aim of fully embedding technology initiatives to improve the services delivered to communities by An Garda Síochána.

I am further advised that Garda stations are currently fitted with analog Telephone Exchanges (PABX's) which provide the telephony requirements for the station to contact and be contacted by the public. As part of the Garda Commissioner's Modernisation and Renewal Programme (MRP) a national Voice Over IP telephony solution will be provided to integrate the telephony systems of all Garda stations into a single telephony core. This will allow An Garda Síochána to manage non-emergency calls from the public to Garda stations more efficiently, and to ensure that all calls are logged and are provided with the appropriate response.

In addition, as part of the MRP, data services are currently being rolled out to sub district stations to provide them with PULSE access and other data services. Data services to District and Divisional Headquarters are also being enhanced to ensure that members have adequate bandwidth to support their requirements and to be in a position to take advantage of modern IT infrastructure that will be rolled out during the Programme.

Question No. 230 answered with Question No. 227.

Garda Equipment

231. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which the Garda transport fleet has been enhanced or is likely to be further enhanced in the coming years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33478/17]

232. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the degree

to which modern communications technology is available in all Garda vehicles; the extent to which all such vehicles are readily contactable on an ongoing basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33479/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 231 and 232 together.

The Deputy will be aware that there has been unprecedented investment in the Garda Fleet in recent years with some €46 million being invested over the lifetime of the Government's Capital Plan 2016 - 2021 to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit for purpose fleet.

The actual expenditure in new and replacement vehicles over the period 2013 to 2016 was in the region of €40 million. This works out at average expenditure of €10 million per annum compared to an average of €1.6 million over the three year period 2009 to 2011 for example. The capital investment over the last 2 years has delivered some 874 new vehicles. There remains some €36 million available for the fleet under the Capital Plan with some €4 million being available in 2017.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that, as on 27 June, 2017, the latest date for which figures are available, the Garda fleet comprised of 2,830 vehicles. This represents an increase of 429 vehicles or almost 18% from 2013. Some 64% of the fleet is now less than 4 years old and, in fact, almost 1 in 6 vehicles are less than one-year-old. This compares with the situation in 2012, for example, where in the region of 89% of the fleet were older than four years and only 1 in 50 (i.e. 2%) of the fleet was less than one-year old.

With regard to modern communications technology, I am informed by the Garda authorities that with the exception of Ministerial and Details vehicles, all other vehicles attached to the Garda fleet are fitted out with radios suitable to meet operational requirements. All operational Garda vehicles are fitted with a secure Tetra mobile radio, which ensures the vehicle is contactable throughout the State and includes a link to the Automatic Vehicle and Personnel Location System (AVPLS) which displays the location of the Garda vehicle in Garda Control Rooms.

Gangland Crime

233. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in combatting gangland feuds with particular reference to ensuring that the rule of law applies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33480/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the response to gang-related violence and crime is ongoing and we must remain adaptable to changing circumstances in pursuing a comprehensive and robust response to gang-related violence and crime. I remain in close contact with the Commissioner and I will continue to provide every support possible to enable An Garda Síochána face down the threat posed by violent criminal gangs.

As the Deputy is aware, the Government has enacted new legislation to further target criminal activities including the Proceeds of Crime (Amendment) Act 2016 which provides additional powers for Gardaí; in particular, powers to allow in certain circumstances for the immediate seizure of assets suspected of being the proceeds of crime to prevent them being disposed of. The thresholds applying under the Proceeds of Crime Act 1996 are also to be reduced from €13,000 to €5,000.

We have also made new regulations to reduce the prescribed amount of cash suspected of being the proceeds of crime which can be seized, from €6,500 to €1,000. In addition, the Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Act 2016, brought forward by the Minister for Health, has new provisions to counteract the illegal sale of prescription drugs.

On 5 July 2016, Government approval was granted in relation to enhancing and updating legislation for the lawful interception of communications and for covert electronic surveillance, and work in this regard is ongoing. My Department and An Garda Síochána are also considering if there are any other legislative measures which might strengthen the response to the activities of organised crime groups.

We have also seen the introduction of rules of court to complete the establishment of a second Special Criminal Court, so that it can deal with the backlog of cases on hand.

The Deputy is aware of the substantial investments which have been made in policing resources. Indeed, for 2017, a further allocation of €88.5 million for Garda overtime has been made available which will facilitate the continuation of large-scale policing operations, including those targeting gangland crime, burglary and terrorist activities.

Garda operational responses to gang-related crime in Dublin are coordinated under Operation Hybrid. As of 18 May 2017, there have been 56 arrests in relation to gang-related killings, with 5 persons charged in connection with those murders and a further 3 persons charged with related offences. In addition, 26 firearms have been seized and over 11,900 lines of enquiry conducted. In excess of 31,550 high visibility checkpoints have been implemented with significant support from Armed Support Units and a significant amount of CCTV footage, mobile phone traffic, and forensic evidence is also being examined. Operation Hybrid is reviewed on a weekly basis to maintain optimal impact.

We have also seen unprecedented cooperation between Irish and Spanish authorities leading to important arrests and seizures, with police officers from both jurisdictions participating in successful joint operations in Ireland and in Spain. There has also been an important arrest of a suspect in the Netherlands and I am committed to ensuring that Gardaí will continue to have all necessary supports to continue their pursuit of criminal groups in cooperation with other police forces as required.

The new dedicated Armed Support Unit for the Dublin Metropolitan Region was launched on 14 December 2016, and is now operational on a 24/7 basis. The establishment of the new ASU had been a particular priority given the identified need to enhance armed support capability in Dublin and to free up the resources of the Emergency Response Unit. All the necessary resources have been provided to equip the new ASU and we have also taken steps to upgrade the equipment available to the Emergency Response Unit and the Special Detective Unit.

During 2016, the Garda Commissioner established a Special Crime Task Force to target a number of organised crime gangs based in the Dublin area with particular emphasis on the second and third level criminals. As part of the setting up of this unit, which is under the control of the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau, 6 additional Garda members and 1 Sergeant were seconded to the Bureau to assist in the investigations into the persons identified to trace and target any assets which have been generated through their criminal conduct.

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 288, plus Revenue Customs and Social Protection trained asset profilers, making a total of 311 asset profilers throughout the State.

Underpinning all these measures is this Government's commitment 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.

Prisoner Rehabilitation Programmes

234. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which all first time prisoners have access to rehabilitative education or training and are segregated from hardened habitual offenders with a view to interrupting their involvement in crime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33481/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by 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 can 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.

Each prisoner, on Committal, is initially placed in a dedicated Committal Unit. They will be assessed during the committal and induction period to determine any risks and will be interviewed by the Governor and informed of the services available 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 began recruiting Assistant Psychologists to the Psychology Service in 2016. Assistant Psychologists focus primarily on mental health and sentence management work with prisoners. Specifically, Assistant Psychologists are tasked with completing Strength, Risk and Needs Assessments of young persons, 18-24 years, who are committed to custody on a sentence of one year or more and who do not have a post release supervision order, to better inform their sentence progression and appropriate interventions. The intention of this focussed approach is to assist young persons committed to custody in living law-abiding and purposeful lives on their release to the community. The Probation Service have recently joined this initiative by engaging in assessments with those 18-24 year olds who do have post release supervision orders.

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 through Integrated Sentence Management and the delivery of prison based rehabilitative programmes.

As well as seeking to draw on best practice in adult and further education in the community, there has been a lot of curriculum development over the years that is specific to prison circumstances, such as courses on addiction, health issues and offending behaviour.

The Department of Education and Skills provides an allocation of 220 whole time teacher equivalents to the Prison Service through the Education and Training Boards . Education in

prisons is delivered in partnership between the Education and Training Boards and the Irish Prison Service with a focus on providing education which is quality assured, student centred and which facilitates lifelong learning. The partnership endeavours to meet the needs of students through helping them cope with their sentence, achieve personal development and prepare for life after release. A broad and flexible curriculum is provided which ranges from basic literacy classes and peer led tutoring to Open University. There is an increasing focus on Quality and Qualification Ireland “QQI” accreditation as the modular structure best meets the needs of students in prison. On some occasions, prisoners may have to wait for a place to become available on an educational programme.

Other areas where there has been significant progress in prison education are in physical education, in the provision for higher education, in the arts and in preparing prisoners for release and supporting their transition to life, and often to education, on the outside. 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.

Prison Management are keen to ensure that all prisoners have access to education and training, including those who are segregated. Education classes are provided to those who are segregated, as appropriate, and they are provided with reading materials, education and art resources.

The Director General of the Irish Prison Service has appointed a high-level Group to introduce a standard Risk Assessment Tool for use throughout the prison estate. This Risk Assessment Tool will include provisions for the assessment of people in custody for suitability for cell-sharing, for moves within individual prisons and other operational decisions. The Assessment Tool is currently being developed with professional advice and assistance from the State Claims Agency, and is very much at an advanced stage and is subject to the usual operational and security considerations.

Prisoner Data

235. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of males and females serving prison sentences; the degree to which the numbers have fluctuated in the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33482/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware the Irish Prison Service collates and publishes the prisoner population breakdown, including those serving prison sentences, on a daily basis and this information is available on the Irish Prison Service website *www.irishprisons.ie*

The average number of prisoners in custody in Ireland has decreased in the last 5 years as outlined in the table below;

Daily Average	Male	Female	Total
Year 2016	3,578	140	3,718
Year 2015	3,591	131	3,722
Year 2014	3,765	150	3,915
Year 2013	4,002	156	4,158
Year 2012	4,166	152	4,318

Prisoner Releases

236. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners on early or temporary release; the number of these that have previously been released and complied with the terms of their release; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33483/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that 252 prisoners were on temporary release on the 10 July 2017, of these 74 prisoners were engaged in the Community Return Scheme and 104 prisoners on the Community Support Scheme. 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.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that information is not collated in the format requested by the Deputy, however I can inform the Deputy that compliance with the conditions of previous periods of temporary release is a deciding factor when considering current and future applications.

Prison Service Data

237. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prison spaces available in all prisons here; the number of incidents in respect of which more than one person shares a cell; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33484/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware the Irish Prison Service collates and publishes the prisoner population breakdown, including the number of prison spaces available in all prisons, on a daily basis and this information is available on the Irish Prison Service website *www.irishprisons.ie*.

The Irish Prison Service collates a quarterly census on cell occupancy and the number of incidents in respect of which more than one person shares a cell are outlined in the April 2017 census below:

Prison	No of prisoners in single cell	No of prisoners in double cell	No of prisoners in triple cell	No of prisoners in 4+ cell
Arbour Hill	95	38	3	0
Castlerea	128	184	9	0
Cloverhill	67	78	192	0
Cork	49	214	0	0
Limerick	108	114	18	0
Loughan House	77	56	0	0
Midlands	368	422	6	20
Mountjoy Male	553	0	0	0
Mountjoy Female	68	42	0	0
Portlaoise	151	76	3	0
Shelton Abbey	37	12	9	54
Training Unit	59	0	0	0
Wheatfield	280	160	0	0
Total	2,040	1,396	240	74

I can inform the Deputy that all committals are assessed upon arrival to prison. This assessment process also seeks to ensure that wherever possible, prisoners are accommodated

in cells appropriate to their needs. Some prisoners are more suited to multi-occupancy cells, while others are more suited to single-cell occupancy. It should be borne in mind that in certain cases prisoners are housed together for reasons other than lack of capacity. Family members and friends often elect or are assigned a shared cell. Shared cell accommodation can be very beneficial from a management point of view particularly for those who are vulnerable and at risk of self-harm.

In addition, the Director General of the Irish Prison Service has appointed a high-level Group to introduce a standard Risk Assessment Tool for use throughout the prison estate. This Risk Assessment Tool will include provisions for the assessment of people in custody for suitability for cell-sharing, for moves within individual prisons and other operational decisions. The Assessment Tool is currently being developed with professional advice and assistance from the State Claims Agency, and is very much at an advanced stage and is subject to the usual operational and security considerations.

Prisoner Rehabilitation Programmes

238. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which he is satisfied that all prisoners serving a sentence for the first time have an opportunity to avail of education and rehabilitative training; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33485/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by 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 can 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.

Each person in custody, on Committal, is initially placed in a dedicated Committal Unit. They will be assessed during the committal and induction period to determine any risks and will be interviewed by the Governor and informed of the services available 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 IPS began recruiting Assistant Psychologists to the IPS Psychology Service in 2016. Assistant Psychologists focus primarily on mental health and sentence management work with persons in custody. Specifically, Assistant Psychologists are tasked with completing Strength, Risk and Needs Assessments of young persons, 18-24 years, who are committed to custody on a sentence of one year or more and who do not have a post release supervision order, to better inform their sentence progression and appropriate interventions. The intention of this focussed approach is to assist young persons committed to custody in living law-abiding and purposeful lives on their release to the community. The Probation Service have recently joined this initiative by engaging in assessments with those 18-24 year olds who do have post release supervision orders.

The development of programmes for people in custody 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 through Integrated Sentence Management and the delivery of prison based rehabilitative programmes.

As well as seeking to draw on best practice in adult and further education in the community, there has been a lot of curriculum development over the years that is specific to prison circumstances, such as courses on addiction, health issues and offending behaviour.

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. Work Training Officers have been appointed and assigned to areas such as catering, laundry, industrial cleaning, industrial skills and gym.

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 and the Guild of Cleaners and Launderers and the centralising of coordination and quality assurance arrangements have enabled us to extend the number of available courses and activities with certification.

The Department of Education and Skills provides an allocation of 220 whole time teacher equivalents to the Prison Service through the Education and Training Boards (ETB). Education in prisons is delivered in partnership between the ETBs and the Irish Prison Service with a focus on providing education which is quality assured, student centred and which facilitates lifelong learning. The partnership endeavours to meet the needs of students through helping them cope with their sentence, achieve personal development and prepare for life after release. A broad and flexible curriculum is provided which ranges from basic literacy classes and peer led tutoring to Open University. There is an increasing focus on QQI accreditation as the modular structure best meets the needs of students in prison. On some occasions, people in custody may have to wait for a place to become available on an educational programme.

Other areas where there has been significant progress in prison education are in physical education, in the provision for higher education, in the arts and in preparing people for release and supporting their transition to life, and often to education, on the outside. 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 Education Service and Prison Management are keen to ensure that all persons in custody have access to education and training, including those who are segregated. Education classes are provided to those who are segregated, as appropriate, and they are provided with reading materials, education and art resources.

The Director General of the Irish Prison Service has appointed a high-level Group to introduce a standard Risk Assessment Tool for use throughout the prison Estate. This Risk Assessment Tool will include provisions for the assessment of people in custody for suitability for cell-sharing, for moves within individual prisons and other operational decisions. The Assessment Tool is currently being developed with professional advice and assistance from the State Claims Agency, and is very much at an advanced stage and is subject to operational and security considerations.

Garda Data

239. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí injured in the course of duty in the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33486/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have requested the information sought by the Deputy from the Garda Commissioner in relation to the number of Gardaí injured in the course of duty in the past five years and I will write to the Deputy on receipt of same.

Garda Reorganisation

240. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the likely extent of reorganisation of An Garda Síochána in the aftermath of various inquiries with a view to restoring confidence and support for the force; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33487/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that there is an extensive programme of reform underway arising from reports into An Garda Síochána, some arising from inquiries into allegations of misconduct, others from reviews into aspects of the operation and administration of the organisation. While these have made, and continue to make, an invaluable contribution to ensuring that we have an effective police service, they were not tasked with examining policing in a “root and branch” manner. In addition institutional arrangements for governance and oversight have evolved significantly in recent years in a piecemeal fashion.

An Garda Síochána is approaching its 100th anniversary. Its members have served with dedication and courage over the decades with some, sadly, having made the ultimate sacrifice, but Ireland is a very different country today than it was at its foundation. It is facing challenges rooted in the rapidly changing nature of society and of crime.

In these circumstances, it is right that we take a step back to ask some fundamental questions about how our State should be policed in the future, what structures are appropriate - is a single police and security service still the best model, to whom should it be accountable, what sort of culture should it embody? I believe the decision taken by Government to establish an independent Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland, to be chaired by Ms Kathleen O’Toole, will prove to be a very important one capable of leaving a valuable legacy.

An important consideration in establishing the Commission was that it would not impede the existing reform programme. The Commission is to report by September 2018 and much can be done in the meantime to modernise the administration and operation of An Garda Síochána. I am determined that there will be no let-up in the reform drive. The work of the oversight bodies must continue and the Government’s support for An Garda Síochána by providing the necessary resources for recruitment and investment must continue.

Crucially, the Commission may bring forward immediate proposals and rolling recommendations for implementation, that it considers are required to be addressed in the short-term, and in advance of its final report. This will allow the reform programme to be adjusted as necessary to ensure that it will deliver a police service fit for modern times.

Criminal Assets Bureau

241. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the scale and value of assets seized by the Criminal Assets Bureau in the past five years; if all such properties have been disposed and the proceeds retained by the State; the status of such properties not yet disposed of in this context; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33488/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Criminal Assets Bureau takes actions under the Proceeds of Crime Acts 1996 to 2016 to deprive or to deny persons of assets which derive, or are suspected to derive, directly or indirectly from criminal conduct; or the benefit of such assets.

Sections 2 and 3 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 1996 provide the mechanism under which the Bureau can apply to the High Court seeking to freeze or restrain a person /entities dealing with a specific asset. In accordance with these provisions, the High Court may, in circumstances where an interim order or interlocutory order under that legislation is in place, appoint a receiver in respect of the property to which the order relates.

Section 4 provides for the transfer of property to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. This Section refers to assets which have been deemed to be the proceeds of criminal conduct, for a period of not less than seven years, and over which no valid claim has been made under Section 3(3) of the Proceeds of Crime Act.

Section 4A allows for a consent disposal order to be made by the respondent, thus allowing the property to be transferred to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in a period shorter than seven years.

In accordance with the provisions of the Criminal Assets Bureau Act 1996 an annual report on the activities of the Bureau is prepared and laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The reports include details of the number of receivership orders obtained, the values of such orders and the amounts realised by the Bureau to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for the benefit of the Central Exchequer in the particular year. The Annual Reports are available in the Oireachtas library and on the website of An Garda Síochána and my Department . The Annual Report of the Bureau for 2016 is awaiting publication in the coming weeks.

For the information of the Deputy I have included in the answer provided, information in tabular format outlining the monies returned to the Exchequer by the Bureau during the period requested as well as the monetary values in relation to orders obtained by the Bureau under the Proceeds of Crime Acts 1996 and 2005 for the same period.

Table A.

Monies returned to the Exchequer by the Bureau

Year	Proceeds of Crime Act 1996/2005€	Revenue Legislation €	Social Welfare Provisions €
2012	4,850,540	1,967,925	393,797
2013	1,038,681	5,418,000	287,380
2014	467,152	3,017,000	335,911
2015	1,642,962	2,038,000	185,354
* 2016	1,412,920	2,106,000	297,430
Total	9,412,255	14,546,925	1,499,872

* *The figures for 2016 have not yet been published and are included in the CAB Annual Report for the year end 2016.*

Table B.

Monetary values obtained under the Proceeds of Crime Act 1996 & 2005

Year	Interim Orders under Section 2€	Interlocutory Orders under Section 3(1)€	Variation Orders under Section 3(3)€
2012	2,110,335	2,017,512	741,552
2013	2,821,305	2,180,940	N/A
2014	6,760,182	1,563,842	N/A
2015	941,079	7,225,092	N/A
* 2016	643,063	1,919,262	N/A

Year	Disposal Orders under Section 4€	Consent Disposal Orders under Section 4A€	Receivership Orders under Section 7€
2012	4,084,489	766,051	1,952,233
2013	852,195	186,485	2,360,698
2014	460,222	6,930	7,195,091
2015	1,352,153	290,809	958,846
* 2016	289,075	1,123,845	887,580

Some figures include sums converted from other currencies

* *The figures for 2016 have not yet been published and are included in the CAB Annual Report for the year end 2016.*

Garda Deployment

242. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which extra gardaí are likely to be deployed to County Kildare in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33489/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 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 informed by the Commissioner that, as of the 31 May 2017, there were 329 Garda together with 21 Garda Reserves and 31 civilians attached to the Kildare 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, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau 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 to 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

This plan is progressing apace. I am informed by the Commissioner, since the reopening of

the Garda College in September 2014, that almost 1,200 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 60 of whom were assigned to the Kildare Division. I am also informed that a further four hundred Garda recruits are scheduled to attest later this year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - an increase of 500 since the end of 2016.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Kildare Division in the coming years.

In so far as the allocation of newly attested Gardaí is concerned, this is a matter for the Garda Commissioner. 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 training and development structures and resources in place, including trained Garda tutors and access to a permanently appointed supervisory Sergeant who is thoroughly familiar with their responsibilities under the training programme.

Garda Investigations

243. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which resources continue to be made available for the pursuit of cold cases including those of missing persons whose whereabouts have never been confirmed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33490/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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.

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 SCRT continues to review serious cases that remain unsolved and continues to identify evidence and witnesses to assist in the development of these cases.

Garda Promotions

244. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of promotions at all levels in An Garda Síochána made in the past 12 months; the number of

vacancies still to be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33491/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware the Policing Authority assumed responsibility for appointments to the senior ranks of Superintendent, Chief Superintendent and Assistant Garda Commissioner with the commencement of the remaining provisions of the Garda Síochána (Policing Services and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015 and related Regulations on 1 January 2017.

Prior to this, appointments to the senior ranks were made by the Government at the request of the Garda Commissioner. The Government made 39 appointments to the senior ranks of An Garda Síochána from 30 June 2016 to the 31 December 2016 as follows: 1 to the rank of Assistant Commissioner, 13 to the rank of Chief Superintendent and 25 to the rank of Superintendent. These appointments were to fill vacancies that had arisen and were within the agreed strength of the Employment Control Framework (ECF).

The Chairperson of the Policing Authority has written to me to advise that the Authority has recently completed a selection competition for appointment to the rank of Chief Superintendent in the Garda Síochána. In accordance with the regulations the Authority established a panel of 15 candidates in the order of merit determined by the Selection Board. Appointments will be made from this panel subject to the Authority's clearance process for candidates.

This is the second selection competition undertaken and completed by the Authority since their functions in relation to senior Garda appointments were commenced on 1 January 2017. I understand that a competition for the rank of Superintendent is also underway and due to be completed by the end of July, that appointments have already been made to 3 positions at Assistant Commissioner rank and that the clearance process is underway with a view to making Chief Superintendent appointments in the coming weeks.

Appointments to the ranks of Sergeant and Inspector are a matter for the Garda Commissioner under section 14 of Garda Síochána Act 2005. Information in relation to the number of promotions to the rank of Sergeant and Inspector has been requested from the Garda Commissioner and I will forward this information directly to the Deputy when it is to hand.

For the Deputy's information I have set out below the number of vacancies in the ranks of An Garda Síochána having regard to the approved ECFs for each rank as provided by the Commissioner.

Vacancies in the ranks of An Garda Síochána - 31 May 2017

RANK	STRENGTH
Chief Superintendent	5
Superintendent	2
Sergeant	81

Garda Operations

245. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the 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 he will make a statement on the matter. [33492/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am sure the Deputy will agree that we are all immensely grateful to An Garda Síochána for their outstanding dedication and commitment and for the important role, all too frequently putting themselves in danger, that

they play in our society. It is imperative that Gardaí are protected in carrying out their work and that the law reflects and responds to the situations in which they find themselves.

The Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994 (as amended) provides explicit statutory protection for peace officers, including members of the Garda Síochána, in relation to offences involving assault to or obstruction of a peace officer in the execution of his or her duty. Section 19 of that Act provides that any person who assaults a peace officer acting in the execution of his or her duty is guilty of an offence and is liable on conviction on indictment to a fine or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 7 years. This maximum prison penalty was, in fact, increased from a 5 year term under the Criminal Justice Act of 2006.

The general law relating to assault is contained in the Non-Fatal Offences against the Persons Act 1997 which deals comprehensively with a wide range of assault provisions, the more serious of which carry heavy penalties. The assault and related provisions in that Act apply to assaults on all sectors of our community which of course also includes members of the Garda Síochána.

The Deputy will be aware that this Government remains 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. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

This plan is progressing apace. I am informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, almost 1,200 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am also informed that a further four hundred are scheduled to attest later this year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - an increase of 500 since the end of 2016.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources she needs to allow her to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division in the coming years.

This investment in personnel 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 have no doubt that these new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities.

Alcohol Sales

246. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of test purchases carried out under the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008 on a county basis in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017, by county, in tabular form. [33523/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Intoxicating Liquor Act 1988, as amended, makes provision for the test purchasing of intoxicating liquor. These provisions give Gardaí an important additional mechanism to facilitate the targeting of licensed premises which are suspected of engaging in illegal sales of intoxicating liquor to persons under 18 years of age.

I regret that I do not have the specific information sought by the Deputy at this time. However, I have sought an update from the Garda authorities and I will contact the Deputy again when this information is to hand.

Garda Districts

247. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí assigned to each district in the Meath Garda Division. [33534/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who 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 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.

For the Deputy's information I have set out below the strength of the Meath Division by station provided by the Commissioner, as of 31 May 2017 (the latest date for which figures are currently available).

Meath Division Strength 31 May 2017

DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
ASHBOURNE	ASHBOURNE	46
	DULEEK	5
	DUNBOYNE	16
	DUNSHAUGHLIN	23
	LAYTOWN	21
	TOTAL:	111
KELLS	BAILE ÁTHA BUÍ	5
	KELLS	33
	OLDCASTLE	3
	TOTAL:	41
NAVAN	NAVAN	90
	NOBBER	3
	SLANE	4
	TOTAL:	97
TRIM	BALLIVOR	2
	ENFIELD	3
	LONGWOOD	2

	SUMMERHILL	2
	TRIM	36
	TOTAL:	45
MEATH TOTAL:		294

Garda Misconduct Allegations

248. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 103 of 23 May 2017, the number that were referred to take no further action; the number that were referred to for further attention; the number referred to for further action that have been fully reviewed and concluded; the number outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33544/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): In May 2014 the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) was established to consider allegations of Garda misconduct or deficiencies in the way that gardaí had carried out investigations. A panel consisting of two Senior and five Junior Counsel was established for the purpose, all selected on the basis of their knowledge of the criminal justice system. Its purpose was to triage these allegations to see whether further action was needed and what that action would be.

Recommendations were returned in all of the 320 complaints referred to the Panel, all of which were accepted by my predecessor. In the majority of cases, a total of 249 cases, the recommendation was that no further action of any type should be taken. Reasons stated for such a recommendation included the fact that in some of the cases the complaints fell outside the remit of the review itself, for example cases which queried the decisions of the DPP or the outcome of court cases. In other cases, the reason was that there were still some ongoing matters either before the Courts or by way of investigations by the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC).

In a further 29 cases, while recommending that no further action should be taken with regard to the specific complaint of Garda misconduct, counsel pointed out that there were actions which the Minister might informally request be undertaken in order to be of some practical assistance to the complainant. These included requesting the Garda Commissioner to appoint a liaison officer to keep the complainant updated on ongoing matters while in others the recommendation was that the Commissioner be requested to provide specific information to a complainant, if appropriate. I can inform the Deputy that the appropriate arrangements have been made to have these recommendations followed through.

A total of 42 cases gave rise to a recommendation for formal action by the Minister. These included the use of powers in the Garda Síochána Act 2005 to refer issues to GSOC for investigation under section 102 and requests to the Garda Commissioner under section 41(2) of the 2005 Act to provide a report on certain matters.

In five cases the recommendation was that the Minister should establish inquiries. In May 2017 the then Minister formally established these 5 inquiries. In each case a retired member of the judiciary was appointed to carry out the inquiry and they have begun that work.

In relation to the 42 cases, 18 cases have been concluded and the complainants have been advised of the final outcome. The remainder, including the 5 statutory inquiries, are still ongoing.

Questions - Written Answers
Citizenship Applications

249. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality in cases such as a case (details supplied) if consideration is being given to a separate process particularly in the context of Brexit; if not, if there are increased numbers in this category; if so, the numbers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33553/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. It is open to any individual who may wish to become an Irish citizen to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory conditions as prescribed in the Act. Every application for a certificate of naturalisation is considered on its own merits having regard to the statutory conditions set out in the Act. There is no provision for a separate process or for differing conditions to apply to applications from different nationalities.

An application for a certificate of naturalisation has been received from the person referred to by the Deputy and this is currently being processed and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

The number of applications for naturalisation received from British nationals in 2015 was 70, in 2016 was 570 and in 2017 to date is 400 approximately.

As the Deputy is aware, it is our intention to maintain the existing arrangements with regard to the United Kingdom, and the Government position is to protect the Common Travel Area arrangements. As outlined, the grant of Irish citizenship is a national competency and there are no current plans to amend the legislation. There are also no plans to change the current position regarding the Common Travel Area in advance of knowing what will be the ultimate arrangements relating to the UK withdrawal from the EU. Should an issue arise in this area during any negotiations between the UK and the other EU member states, the position will be revisited at that stage.

Detailed information on Irish citizenship and naturalisation, as well as the relevant application forms, is available on the INIS website at www.inis.gov.ie. The website also contains guidance on the completion of an application for naturalisation.

Departmental Titles

250. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the cost of rebranding and or renaming her Department, in particular the costs of acquiring new stationary, signage and public awareness campaign and so on, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33171/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): On 14th June 2017, An Taoiseach announced the new Government, signalling a reconfiguration of the Department, with responsibility for culture, heritage, Gaeilge, Gaeltacht and the islands. On Thursday 6th July I confirmed that the new name of the Department will be the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. My officials are now preparing an order to change the name of the Department and the Minister's title, under the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act 1939.

Arrangements to update the Department's website and associated materials will also be

made in the coming weeks. Any costs arising will be met from existing administrative budget provisions. I am advised that it is not expected that significant costs will arise as much of the work involved will be completed in-house and that existing stationery stocks will be replaced upon re-order.

Leader Programmes Funding

251. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will address a matter (details supplied); and if a deadline can be changed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33216/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): All matters related to the programme referred to by the Deputy are the responsibility of Local Action Groups which administer the programme in their respective areas, and I have no function in relation to those matters. The project promoter in this case would need to deal directly with the relevant Local Action Group in relation to any potential extension of the deadline referred to by the Deputy.

CLÁR Programme

252. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the timeframe for approval of the remaining €731,126 of CLÁR funding under measure 3 targeted community infrastructure needs of the €1.5 million announced on 30 May 2017 and the approval of €768,874 under phase 1 of the measure 3; if further funds can be made available for 2017 under measures 1 and 2; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33256/17]

253. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the mathematical equation or calculation applied as the basis for the pro rata distribution in the decision-making process in relation to the 2017 CLÁR programme; the extent to which the proportion of the counties within the CLÁR process (details supplied) was taken into account in the overall process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33257/17]

254. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if a scoring framework linked to the criteria applied by her Department in determination of final allocations of funding was used in relation to the 2017 CLÁR programme; the calculations that were applied; and the weighting given to the overall process (details supplied). [33258/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 252 to 254, inclusive, together.

The 2017 CLÁR programme was launched on 31st March last, with a closing date of 5th May. The programme provides funding for small-scale infrastructural projects in disadvantaged rural areas that have experienced significant levels of depopulation.

Funding for the 2017 CLÁR programme was available this year under four separate Measures:

Measure 1: Support for School and Community Safety Measures

Measure 2: Play Areas

Measure 3: Targeted Community Infrastructure

Measure 4: First Responder Supports

Applications under Measures 1, 2 and 3 were submitted through the Local Authorities, while applications under Measure 4 were submitted from voluntary organisations involved in community-based response to emergency situations.

In total, more than 500 applications were received across the four Measures, with a combined value of €15 million.

While an indicative allocation was originally apportioned for each Measure, these allocations were adjusted to take account of the number and quality of applications received under each Measure. The overall amount allocated to projects was also increased from €5 million to €7 million. A total of 230 successful projects were approved for funding in recent weeks across the four Measures. Details of the approved projects are available at <http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/rural/rural-development/clar-2016/>.

In general, my Department received a larger number of applications from counties with a high number of CLÁR District Electoral Divisions. Applications were assessed on the basis of their eligibility under the scheme criteria and on the quality of the documentation submitted to the Department in support of their proposals, as required in the scheme guidelines.

All applications which met the eligibility criteria and which were supported by adequate documentation as required were approved for funding under each Measure.

Contracts for the approved funding have now issued to all relevant Local Authorities and voluntary first-response organisations as appropriate. There is currently no further funding available for CLÁR in 2017.

Foreshore Licence Applications

255. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she is satisfied regarding the submitted observation in relation to a foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway Bay, in view of the fact that the council stated that due to limitations on staff resources, the Heritage Council will not be in a position to comment on this application; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33326/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I refer the Deputy to my response to Questions Nos. 489 and 490 of 28 February last.

The Heritage Council is an independent statutory body, under the aegis of my Department, established in accordance with the Heritage Act 1995 and is separately a statutory consultee to the planning process, as a prescribed body under the Planning and Development Acts 2000, as amended. Observations made by the Heritage Council in this regard are a matter for the Council.

CLÁR Programme

256. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gael-

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tacht Affairs if she will expedite an application for CLÁR funding by a group (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33331/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The 2017 CLÁR programme was launched on 31st March 2017 and provides funding for small-scale infrastructural projects in disadvantaged rural areas that have experienced significant levels of depopulation. Funding was available this year under four separate Measures:

Measure 1: Support for School and Community Safety Measures

Measure 2: Play Areas

Measure 3: Targeted Community Infrastructure

Measure 4: First Responder Supports

Applications under Measures 1, 2 and 3 were submitted through the Local Authorities, while Measure 4 was targeted at voluntary organisations involved in emergency rescue or first-response efforts. The closing date for applications under the 2017 CLÁR programme was 5th May 2017 and over 500 applications were received across the four measures.

Successful projects were announced over the last few weeks, with a total of just under €7 million allocated to approximately 230 projects across the four Measures.

Details of the approved projects are available at <http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/rural/rural-development/clar-2016/>.

I understand that an application was not received in respect of the group in question.

Brexit Issues

257. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the position regarding the development of sectoral response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33333/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As advised to the House in my response to Parliamentary Question No. 923 of 20th June last following the publication by the Government on 2nd May of a comprehensive document on *Ireland and the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the European Union under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union*. This document sets out the approach of the Government to the forthcoming negotiations, and work is under way across Departments to prepare adaptive Sectoral Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders and will encompass the following themes:

- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;
- Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;
- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the

sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;

- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;
- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

All of this work is ongoing and must also respond to the emerging developments in the Brexit negotiations. There is no decision as yet on publication dates. Arising from the reconfiguration of my Department, I will continue to monitor and examine the various ways in which Brexit could impact on the culture, heritage and Gaeltacht sectors. Concluding a mutually acceptable Brexit deal will be important from the perspective of these sectors, as will maintaining a favourable context for the operation of North-South Implementation Bodies established under the Good Friday Agreement, two of which, Waterways Ireland and the Language Body, come under the remit of my Department.

Foreshore Licence Applications

258. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the process of assessment leading to the observations submitted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in its role as a named external consultee, advising the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in relation to the foreshore lease planning application on Galway Bay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33361/17]

259. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she is satisfied that public concerns to date reported to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, NPWS, concerning the NPWS's submitted observation and concerns regarding the application and the protection of the surrounding networks of Natura 2000 sites in relation to a foreshore lease application (details supplied) on Galway Bay have been investigated by the NPWS; if the Minister of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government has been informed and advised of resulting concerns; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33362/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 258 and 259 together.

I refer to Deputy to my response to Questions Nos. 489 and 490 of 28 February last.

The engagement of my Department in this issue is complete and it now is a statutory matter for the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

My position is unchanged from those earlier replies.

Hedge Cutting Season

260. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of warnings issued over the past three years in respect of hedge cutting; the number of notices issued by local authorities in respect of tree and hedge cutting along public roads on health and safety grounds; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33368/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Roads Acts 1993 contains provisions allowing local authorities to serve notices on landowners where a hedge or other type of vegetation is considered a hazard on public roads on health and safety grounds. The operation of the Roads Act is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. Accordingly, my Department has no information as to the number of notices or warnings issued by local authorities to landowners under the Act.

Banking Sector

261. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if responsibility for the public banking investigation has been transferred to his Department; the date on which the transfer took place; the timeframe for the remainder of the investigation; the date of publication of the final report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33524/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Programme for a Partnership Government envisaged that An Post, the Irish League of Credit Unions and other interested stakeholders would be asked to investigate and propose a new model of community banking, such as the Kiwibank model in New Zealand, which could be delivered through the post office network. The Programme for Government also includes a commitment to investigate the German Sparkassen model for the development of local public banks that operate within well-defined regions.

As I have pointed out in response to previous questions from the Deputy, my Department has been working actively with the Department of Finance to progress the Programme for a Partnership Government commitments.

Specific functions related to rural affairs will shortly transfer from my Department to the new Department of Rural and Community Development under the remit of Minister Michael Ring. I anticipate that responsibility for completing the examination of the public banking model will be transferred to Minister Ring's Department.

In the meantime, my Department is continuing to work with the Department of Finance to finalise their consideration of the merits of local public banks in an Irish context. I understand that the work is close to completion and a report will be submitted to Government when it is finalised.

Commencement of Legislation

262. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health when all sections of the Children and Families Relationships Act 2015 will be enacted; the timeframe for full enactment; if there are barriers impinging on the rights of same sex married partners and their children prior to enactment of all sections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33266/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 (Commencement of Certain Provisions Order) 2016 (S.I. No. 12 of 2016) commenced the bulk of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 with effect from 18 January 2016. That Commencement Order brought provisions of Parts 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12 and 13 of the Act into operation. Part 10 of the Act, which amended the Passports Act 2008, was commenced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade on 1 July 2015.

Parts 2 and 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 provide for parentage through donor-assisted human reproduction (DAHR). The issue of the recognition of parentage for same sex couples and their children is dealt with under Part 2 of the Act. It was indicated during the passage of the Children and Family Relationships Bill 2015 through the Dáil and the Seanad that an appropriate transition period for these Parts would be required in order to carry out significant preparatory work to facilitate a seamless transition to the new regulatory framework laid out in the Act. Detailed work on Parts 2 and 3 is underway and it is intended that these will be commenced later this year. Other provisions of the Act which relate to DAHR which are related to Parts 2 and 3 will be co-ordinated with the commencement of those Parts.

Mental Health Services

263. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which children or teenagers liable to self-harm continue to have ready access to support services such as counselling and follow-up visits; the degree to which patterns over the past number of years have illustrated the adequacy of such support services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33569/17]

337. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which children or teenagers liable to self-harm continue to have ready access to support services such as counselling and follow-up visits; the degree to which patterns over the past number of years have illustrated the adequacy of such support services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31213/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 263 and 337 together.

In March 2016, the HSE Mental Health Division established the National Clinical Programme for the Assessment and Management of Patients Presenting to Emergency Departments following Self-Harm. This clinical programme specifically addresses the care and treatment required by people who present to the Emergency Departments of acute hospitals following an episode of self-harm or with prominent suicidal ideation.

The aim of this programme is to develop a standardised and effective process for the assessment and management of individuals of all age ranges, including children and adolescents, who present with self-harm to an Emergency Department. Training offered by this programme ensures that patients and their families have access to clinicians with sufficient expertise to provide high-quality, evidence-based care and treatment. Critical to the success of this clinical programme is the consolidation and further development of close working relationships between the Emergency Department clinical team, mental health liaison staff and Community Mental Health teams and GP services. The objectives of this programme are to improve the assessment and management of all individuals who present to an Emergency Department with self-harm; reduce rates of repeated self-harm; improve access to appropriate interventions at times of personal crisis; ensure rapid and timely linkage to appropriate follow-up care; and optimise the experience of families and carers in trying to support those who present with self-harm.

Following clinical assessment of a person who presents to an Emergency Department following self-harm, a decision regarding treatment of the individual is required. This may indicate admission to a general hospital, if physical care is required. If significant mental health considerations are clinically identified, referral to mental health services in accordance with the criteria set out in the Mental Health Acts may be appropriate. Alternatively, the individual could be referred to appropriate primary care services and supports. All such clinical decisions

are set out in the Discharge and Management Plan – Emergency Care Plan developed with, and given to, the patient and family/friend (with consent). In addition, the HSE currently funds a number of agencies to provide a variety of counselling services to young people. This includes 13 Jigsaw sites nationally.

The points raised by the Deputy in relation to the pattern and adequacy of support services have been referred to the HSE, as this is an operational matter for direct reply.

Road Safety

264. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of cyclists who have been injured due to an adverse interaction with the Luas cross city works in each of the years since the works began and to date in 2017; the number of cyclists who attended an emergency department due to these adverse interactions each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33124/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

265. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied) [33137/17]

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 Status

266. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a tonsillectomy will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33139/17]

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.

Hospice Services Provision

267. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the level of funding available through his Department for each county hospice group or regional hospice group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33140/17]

268. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the capital allowances that have been paid for each hospice group that have provided beds and permanent facilities for patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33141/17]

269. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the current expenditure available for hospice groups for the employment of night nurses, staff or other expenditure to persons in need of care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33142/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 267 to 269, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Appointments Administration

270. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) can be facilitated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33150/17]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

271. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health when a psychological and needs assessment will be carried out on a person (details supplied). [33151/17]

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 servic-

es 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 (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Help Service Provision

272. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if home help has now been facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33152/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Card Applications

273. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date in the determination of an application for a medical card by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33153/17]

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.

Medical Card Applications

274. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date in the determination of an application for a medical card by a person (details supplied); if same has now been received and associated with the file; when a decision is likely to be reached; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33154/17]

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

275. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a cardiac procedure will be accommodated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33155/17]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

276. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the alternative service provisions within intellectual disability services being put in place to accommodate young persons that are transitioning from children's services to adult services in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33156/17]

277. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the locations in which the alternative service provisions within intellectual disability services will be in County Donegal to accommodate young persons that are transitioning from children's services to adult services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33157/17]

278. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when the alternative service provisions within intellectual disability services will be available to accommodate young persons that are transitioning from children's services to adult services in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33158/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 276 to 278, 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 question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Delays

279. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) must wait two and a half years for an appointment to see an ear specialist; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33160/17]

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

280. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) is likely to be facilitated for removal of cataract, in view of the serious impairment of vision of the person and the fact they have been awaiting the procedure for almost a year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33161/17]

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 Applications

281. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date in the determination of an application for a medical card in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33163/17]

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 Appointments Status

282. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33168/17]

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.

Hospice Services Provision

283. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of the 15 bed specialist inpatient unit hospice at University Hospital Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33197/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Waiting Lists

284. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive an appointment at Letterkenny University Hospital, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33200/17]

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

285. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive a date for a hip replacement in Letterkenny University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33201/17]

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

286. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Donegal is on the urgent or routine waiting list for a hip replacement in Letterkenny University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33202/17]

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.

Health Services Staff

287. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason agency staff (details supplied) in County Donegal had their hours reduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33203/17]

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 (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Accident and Emergency Departments

288. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health his plans to downgrade the accident and emergency services at Portiuncula hospital, Ballinasloe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33204/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am not aware of any plans to downgrade any Emergency Department facilities in Portiuncula University Hospital (PUH).

With regard to services at PUH, consultants in General Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Respiratory, Cardiology, Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Radiology and Paediatrics have been successfully recruited since the beginning of 2016. A Consultant Geriatrician position will be advertised later in 2017. Whole time equivalent staff (WTE) numbered 704 in March, 2017.

The Portiuncula ED has been performing well this year. Patient experience times for PUH are significantly better than the national average; 71.3% of patients have been admitted or discharged within 6 hours, 90.1% within 9 hours, and 99.9% within 24 hours this year to date, whereas the national averages for the same time period have been 66%, 80.7% and 96.5% respectively.

Plans for the expansion of other facilities at PUH are on-going; it is proposed to provide a 50 bed ward block to replace existing ward accommodation at PUH, by providing upgrades to ward accommodation, including additional isolation rooms. Funding was made available in the current HSE Capital Plan to bring the project to the design and planning stage. The HSE has advised that planning permission has been awarded and the design stage is now complete.

Accident and Emergency Departments

289. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health his plans to downgrade the accident and emergency services at Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33205/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Midland Regional Hospital, Mullingar is part of the Ireland East Hospital Group. Each Hospital Group is developing a strategic plan to describe how it will provide more efficient and effective patient services and reorganise its services to provide optimal care to the populations it serves. Every hospital in the Ireland East Group has a vital role to play within the Group. There are no plans to downgrade the accident and emergency services at the Midland Regional Hospital, Mullingar.

Accident and Emergency Departments

290. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health his plans to downgrade the accident and emergency services at University Hospital Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33206/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): There are no plans to downgrade the Emergency Department at University Hospital Galway (UHG). To the contrary, plans for a new and significantly expanded ED at UHG are at design phase.

Given recognised capacity challenges with regard to the existing ED at University Hospital Galway, the Programme for a Partnership Government provides as follows: “*A new ED for UHG is currently being designed with a view to funding for construction being provided as part of the 2017 Capital Plan Review* ”.

Significant progress has been made in terms of planning for the new ED. Funding had been indented in the 2017 Capital Plan to progress to the design phase of the development of a new ED for UHG.

The HSE advises that the Contract Notice for the first stage design team procurement for the UHG ED project was submitted to the eTenders website for publishing on 2nd May, 2017. It is expected that tender documents will be completed and issued by the end of July, 2017.

The Saolta Group has committed to working to expedite this project as effectively as possible, as a new ED will provide valuable opportunities to significantly improve safety, dignity and privacy for patients attending UHG Emergency Department. In the intervening period, prior to completion of the new ED, significant effort is being dedicated to initiatives to improve patient flow in at Galway University Hospital in order to effectively manage the provision of emergency care on a 24/7 basis.

UHG is a pilot site for the National GE Fingamore Patient Flow project. This project is underway on site and encompasses both unscheduled care and scheduled care patient flow. Under this initiative, the Hospital is progressing a number of key process improvement initiatives, which include optimising ED escalation procedures, patient flow processes and bi-directional flow to/from other Saolta Hospitals as well as capacity modelling for inpatients and outpatients. The Saolta Group advises that participation in this project has resulted in significant improvements.

Accident and Emergency Departments

291. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health his plans to downgrade the accident and emergency services at Mayo University Hospital, Castlebar; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33207/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am not aware of any plans to downgrade any Emergency Department facilities in Mayo University Hospital (MUH).

The Mayo ED has been performing well this year. Patient experience times for MUH are significantly better than the national average; 73.5% of patients have been admitted or discharged within 6 hours, 91.7% within 9 hours, and 99.9% within 24 hours this year to date, whereas the national averages for the same time period have been 66%, 80.7% and 96.5% respectively.

The Department of Health and the HSE are currently engaged in a process to commence winter planning for next year and to work towards an improvement trajectory in ED performance, including at the Mayo ED.

Accident and Emergency Departments

292. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health his plans to downgrade the accident and emergency services at Sligo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33208/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am not aware of any plans to downgrade any Emergency Department facilities in Sligo University Hospital (SUH).

The Sligo ED has been performing well this year. Patient experience times for SUH are similar to the national average for 6 hour PET and better than the national average for 9 and 24 hour PET.

65.4% of patients have been admitted or discharged within 6 hours, 84.8% within 9 hours, and 99.6% within 24 hours this year to date, whereas the national averages for the same time period have been 66%, 80.7% and 96.5% respectively.

Plans for the expansion of some facilities at SUH are on-going; a Phase 1 redevelopment to include a Ward Block, Theatre Department and new ED is funded to design phase, as is a Central Sterile Services Department upgrade. A new interventional Radiology suite is in design phase and funded to completion (currently scheduled for 2020).

Maternity Services

293. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health his plans in to downgrade the maternity services at Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33209/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy can be assured that I have no plans to downgrade the maternity services at Portiuncula Hospital.

The National Maternity Strategy recognises that smaller maternity services cannot, and should not, operate in isolation as stand-alone entities. Those units cannot sustain the breadth and depth of clinical services that the populations they serve require without formal links to larger units. Accordingly, Maternity Networks are being established across Hospital Groups and being overseen by the *National Women & Infants Health Programme*. Through the development of the networks, and the sharing of expertise within the networks, the operational resilience of smaller units will be strengthened and such units can be supported to provide safe high quality maternity services.

Maternity Services

294. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health his plans to downgrade the maternity services at Midland Regional Hospital, Mullingar; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33210/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy can be assured that I have no plans to downgrade the maternity services at Midland Regional Hospital, Mullingar.

The National Maternity Strategy recognises that smaller maternity services cannot, and should not, operate in isolation as stand-alone entities. Those units cannot sustain the breadth and depth of clinical services that the populations they serve require without formal links to larger units. Accordingly, Maternity Networks are being established across Hospital Groups and this is being overseen by the *National Women & Infants Health Programme*. Through the development of the networks, and the sharing of expertise within the networks, the operational resilience of smaller units will be strengthened and such units can be supported to provide safe high quality maternity services.

Maternity Services

295. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health his plans to downgrade the maternity services at University Hospital Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33211/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy can be assured that I have no plans to downgrade the maternity services at University Hospital Galway.

The National Maternity Strategy recognises that smaller maternity services cannot, and should not, operate in isolation as stand-alone entities. Those units cannot sustain the breadth and depth of clinical services that the populations they serve require without formal links to larger units. Accordingly, Maternity Networks are being established across Hospital Groups and being overseen by the *National Women & Infants Health Programme*. Through the development of the networks, and the sharing of expertise within the networks, the operational resilience of smaller units will be strengthened and such units can be supported to provide safe high quality maternity services.

Maternity Services

296. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health his plans to downgrade the maternity services at Mayo University Hospital, Castlebar; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33212/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy can be assured that I have no plans to downgrade the maternity services at Mayo University Hospital.

The National Maternity Strategy recognises that smaller maternity services cannot, and should not, operate in isolation as stand-alone entities. Those units cannot sustain the breadth and depth of clinical services that the populations they serve require without formal links to larger units. Accordingly, Maternity Networks are being established across Hospital Groups and being overseen by the *National Women & Infants Health Programme*. Through the development of the networks, and the sharing of expertise within the networks, the operational resilience of smaller units will be strengthened and such units can be supported to provide safe high quality maternity services.

Maternity Services

297. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health his plans to downgrade the maternity services at Sligo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33213/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy can be assured that I have no plans to downgrade the maternity services at Sligo University Hospital.

The National Maternity Strategy recognises that smaller maternity services cannot, and should not, operate in isolation as stand-alone entities. Those units cannot sustain the breadth and depth of clinical services that the populations they serve require without formal links to larger units. Accordingly, Maternity Networks are being established across Hospital Groups and being overseen by the *National Women & Infants Health Programme*. Through the development of the networks, and the sharing of expertise within the networks, the operational

resilience of smaller units will be strengthened and such units can be supported to provide safe high quality maternity services.

Primary Care Centres Provision

298. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Health the number of primary care centres in south County Mayo; his plans to open further primary care centres in south County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33215/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for the provision, along with the maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities, the Executive has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Delays

299. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an appointment for a person (details supplied) at University Hospital, Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33235/17]

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 Applications

300. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card application submitted by a person (details supplied) whose sole income is derived from a social welfare payment. [33241/17]

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.

Community Care

301. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the community supports

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for persons caring for persons with dementia here; his plans to expand the support levels for those persons caring for persons with dementia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33246/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

General Practitioner Services

302. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No.1106 of 20 June 2017, the name of the body or Department responsible for the purchase and supply of medical equipment for use by general practitioners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33247/17]

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 for direct reply.

Hospital Waiting Lists

303. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a date for surgery for a person (details supplied). [33255/17]

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.

Medicinal Products Regulation

304. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the increased risk of violence and suicide among young persons under 25 years of age using SSRI anti depressants; the studies that he has requested to be carried out into this drug; if he has given consideration to attaching a black box warning to this class of drugs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33259/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are a group of anti-depressant medications available through prescription only and are authorised for use in Ireland and across the EU for the treatment of depressive disorders and some anxiety related conditions. Some of these medications are also authorised for use in children and adolescents aged 8 to 18 years for the treatment of moderate to severe major depressive episodes if the depression is unresponsive to psychological therapy. Depression may be associated with an increased risk of suicidal thoughts, self-harm and suicide. This risk may persist, particularly in the early stages of treatment when a patient starts to take an anti-depressant

until significant remission of their depression occurs. Across the EU, the product information documents (the Summary of Product Characteristics ('SmPC') and the Package Leaflet ('PL')) are the main documents for communication of information and advice regarding a medicine. The format and content of these documents is laid down in legislation and regulatory guidance documents. The SmPC and PL are reviewed and approved as an intrinsic part of the licensing of a medicine. They are continuously updated for all medicines, to reflect the current state of knowledge of the medicine and the risks associated with its use. As such, it is considered important for healthcare professionals and patients/carers to regularly read/review these documents to support safe and appropriate use. It is important to note too, that the information included in the US 'black box' is entirely consistent with that provided in the approved product information (SmPC and PL) for SSRIs in the EU.

The SmPC is mainly intended for use by healthcare professionals and includes detailed information on the use, dosing recommendations, precautions for use and the known side-effects of the medicine concerned. The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) is the competent authority for the regulation of medicines in Ireland. SmPCs for products currently authorised in Ireland are accessible from the HPRA website (www.hpra.ie). The PL reflects the more comprehensive information described in the SmPC, but is required to be presented in an abbreviated and easy-to-read format and is subject to user-testing to ensure its ease of readability. Healthcare professionals and patients are advised of the risk of suicide associated with SSRIs through the product information for the individual SSRI medicines which specifically highlight the need for monitoring of the patient following initiation of therapy: 'as improvement may not occur during the first few weeks or more of treatment, patients should be closely monitored until such improvement occurs'. The Package Leaflet accompanying these products advises that patients and their care-givers should be alerted about the need to monitor for any clinical worsening, suicidal behaviour or thoughts, or unusual changes in behaviour and to seek medical advice immediately if these symptoms appear. With respect to SSRIs used in children and adolescents aged 8 to 18 years with depression, the product information for SSRIs describes that treatment should be initiated and monitored under specialist supervision, with dose adjustments made carefully, on an individual basis, to maintain the patient at the most effective dose. For children who respond to treatment, the need for continued treatment after 6 months should be reviewed. If no clinical benefit is achieved within 9 weeks, treatment should be reconsidered. The HPRA, in conjunction with European counterparts, continues to review the safety of authorised medicines and takes appropriate regulatory action when necessary, including product information updates through the applicable authorisation framework for the medicines concerned. The HPRA emphasises the fact that all medicines have some risks and a small number of people may develop side effects (also known as adverse reactions). The decision to use a particular medicinal product for an individual patient rests with the healthcare professional treating the patient. The clinician balances the risks associated with a medicine in the context of the overall benefit of the medicine to the health of the patient and the condition being treated.

Health Services Provision

305. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that have been assessed as requiring a place at a day care centre in County Kildare, by day care centre, and by town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33260/17]

306. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Health the provision that has been made for allocation of additional resources to the operation of day care centres in County Kildare; the way in which he plans to reduce the 52 plus week waiting list for a placement; the way in which he plans to improve service provision; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [33261/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 305 and 306 together.

As these are service matters they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Health Services Data

307. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the number of assessments of need of care that have been identified that attendance at a day care centre would be beneficial to a person's wellbeing; the number of persons on waiting lists; the way in which these waiting lists are managed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33262/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

National Carers Strategy Implementation

308. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he has carried out research into the provision of training and social outlets for those providing 24 hour care to family members; if research has been carried out on the social and personal needs of carers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33263/17]

309. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if an assessment of the holistic needs of the population of adult carers in the home has been carried out; the way in which they might be supported to best care for loved ones in the home; the social support outlets and emotional supports available to such families; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33264/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 308 and 309 together.

The National Carers' Strategy was published in 2012. The key objectives are to recognise and value the important role played by carers, to promote their inclusion in care decisions, to encourage carers to look after their own health and wellbeing, and to ensure that carers have a life outside of, and after, caring. The Strategy lists action areas under each of these objectives, the implementation of which requires more specific actions to be identified and progressed by the various Departments and Agencies allocated responsibility for delivery.

The main third sector organisation representing carers, Family Carers Ireland, engages regularly with Government Departments on issues of concern to carers, and now publishes an annual Family Carers Scorecard, which rates the Government's progress on achieving each of the actions in the Carers' Strategy.

Government officials also meet carers' representative organisations at an annual Carers Forum hosted by the Department of Social Protection. This provides a useful arena for carers to raise issues of particular concern to them. In the Health area these have included the need for improved access to respite, the need for better hospital discharge planning and the need for better information for carers.

A considerable amount of research is undertaken, including by NGOs with a specific remit in relation to caring. This research includes the type and availability of supports for people providing care for others on an informal basis. The State supports such research directly and indirectly such as through the provision of funding support by various agencies and Departments

The Single Assessment Tool (SAT) which is a comprehensive IT based standardised assessment used to assess the health and social care needs of people (primarily those over the age of 65 years) who may be looking for support under the Nursing Home Support Scheme or home care services completed its national pilot in Q2 2017. It is now progressing towards national implementation across the HSE. As part of this project, a specific Carers Needs Assessment is also being developed with input from Family Carers Ireland.

The Department is working to improve the supports available to carers and is engaged in an extensive programme of health care reform. Examples include the extension of free GP care to the over 70s. It is also committed to improving the level of home supports for older people and to improving services for people with a disability and mental health issues and to the people who care for them. A range of training programmes for carers are provided directly by the HSE jointly with carers' representative groups or directly by carers' representative organisations. The National Carers Strategy Fourth Progress Report, available at <http://health.gov.ie/future-health/older-people/national-carers-strategy/> provides a comprehensive overview of the Actions being delivered under the Strategy. We are committed to the continued implementation of the Strategy

Cancer Services Provision

310. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the grant which was available through the HSE to purchase a wig for patients suffering with alopecia has now been withdrawn; if he will ensure that this grant is reinstated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33268/17]

312. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the reason changes to policy relating to breast cancer supports were recently announced by the HSE; if he will ensure these supports are not reduced for persons affected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33276/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 310 and 312 together.

I became aware through media reports on 30 June of the HSE's intention to introduce revised arrangements for the provision of supports to patients who are being or have been treated for cancer and other illnesses. I understand that the HSE's objective was to develop more equitable arrangements for the provision of post-mastectomy products, wigs and hairpieces and to extend these supports to a broader cohort of patients. Neither my Department nor I were involved or consulted in the course of this process. At my request, the HSE has deferred introduction of the proposed changes. I have asked the Executive to re-examine the matter with a view to devising a plan which will achieve an equitable outcome but not lessen the level of provision for patients who are already coping with serious illness. The HSE has confirmed that the *status quo* will operate pending further consideration of the matter, including discussions with my Department.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

12 July 2017

311. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the progress which has been made to recruit staff at Dungarvan community hospital to enable St Patrick's ward to reopen, which closed as a result of staff shortages; the expected timeline for reopening; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33275/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Question No. 312 answered with Question No. 310.

Hospital Charges

313. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if he has satisfied himself that all persons are suitably informed of the services they will receive in both the public and private system prior to signing the patient waiver form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33277/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): When patients are admitted to hospital they have the option of being treated as a public patient or private patient. Those patients opting to be treated privately have chosen to pay the consultant and the hospital in respect of the services that each provides. The charges applied in respect of private care in a public hospital relate not only to accommodation costs but also costs associated with non-consultant hospital doctors, nursing staff, medicines, blood, medical and surgical supplies, radiology, diagnostics, operating theatres, laboratories, administration and support staff.

The operational procedures for the management of patients' treatment preferences and the collection of private inpatient charges are a matter for the HSE in the first instance and I have asked the Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this regard.

Hospital Services

314. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether the south east region is the only region nationally without a 24/7 cardiac care service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33278/17]

316. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether referring heart attack patients to outside centres where travel times can be double the European standard of 60 minutes is proven to be a clinical sub-optimal treatment protocol (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33280/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 314 and 316 together.

Primary PCI is recognised internationally as the preferred treatment of STEMI in terms of morbidity and mortality outcomes. Highly specialised services such as primary PCI need to be carried out in a small number of hospitals, where the volume of patients supports the provision of a safe service. Low volume services do not facilitate the ongoing and sustainable achievement of the patient outcomes required. Based upon this country's population, we can only operate a limited number of primary PCI centres in order to ensure that the services we provide achieve the required standards.

Across the country, patients are transferred to cardiac centres for primary PCI. For example

patients in Louth are transferred to Dublin, patients in Kerry go to CUH or Limerick. As the Deputy is aware, primary PCI is provided at University Hospital Waterford from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday, and patients are transferred to CUH or to St James's Hospital Dublin for primary PCI outside of these hours. Where primary PCI cannot be delivered within an acceptable timeframe, thrombolysis is recommended with early transfer to a primary PCI centre for angiography. My aim is 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 and, accordingly, I have asked my Department to make arrangements for a national review of primary PCI services to be undertaken, based on independent clinical expertise.

Hospital Services

315. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether in multiple worldwide clinical assessments primary emergency coronary angioplasty and stenting for ST elevated heart attack has been demonstrated to only be effective if carried out soon after the first presentation of symptoms of heart attack, as after 90 minutes the benefits of primary PCI are negligible as heart muscle starved of oxygen and blood supply has already died and is not replaceable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33279/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a matter relating to the clinical management of myocardial infarction, this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Question No. 316 answered with Question No. 314.

Hospital Waiting Lists

317. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will schedule an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33281/17]

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.

Brexit Documents

318. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if he

will make a statement on the matter. [33341/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): On 2 May, the Government published a comprehensive document on *Ireland and the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the European Union under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union*. This document sets out the approach of the Government to the forthcoming negotiations, following the successful campaign to have key Irish issues recognised in the EU negotiation position. Following on from publication of this document, work is underway across departments to prepare adaptive Sectoral Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders, and will encompass the following themes:

- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;

- Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;

- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;

- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;

- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

All of this work is ongoing and must also respond to the emerging developments in the Brexit negotiations. There is no decision as yet on publication dates.

I should add, that the Department of Health and its agencies have been conducting detailed analysis on the impacts of Brexit in the area of health. A number of issues are being examined and contingency planning for a range of eventualities is underway. A key issue will be to ensure that there is minimum disruption to health services and that essential services are maintained on a cross-border, all-island and Ireland-UK basis. The key priorities for my Department are therefore to ensure continuity in the provision of health services and to avoid, or mitigate against, changes to the current situation that would have a negative impact on human health. The Department of Health will continue to work closely with the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other departments on Brexit, and to work and contribute as required to the cross Governmental response, including on the themes identified, in light of the ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders.

Health Services Provision

319. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can be facilitated at Naas day care centre; if a placement can be offered in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33372/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Respite Care Services Availability

320. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if respite services are being provided at a facility (details supplied) in County Donegal; if not, the alternative provisions available to service users; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33399/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospitals Building Programme

321. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if the design phase for the MRI facility for Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar is completed. [33402/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Drug Treatment Programmes Places

322. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that sought drug treatment and rehabilitation services by local health area in Dublin over the past five years and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33444/17]

323. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that accessed drug treatment and rehabilitation services by local health area in Dublin over the past five years and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33445/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 322 and 323 together.

As these are service matters, they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Drug Treatment Programmes Funding

324. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the budget for drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation projects in each of the past five years; the projected budget for 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33446/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The funding provided for drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation projects for the past five years, in addition to the funding provided in 2017, is set out in the table below.

LDATF	2012	2013	2014 DOH	2014 HSE	2015 DOH	2015 HSE	2016 DOH	2016 HSE	2017 DOH	2017 HSE
Ballyfermot	€1,569,489	€1,522,404	€461,150	€1,025,582	€255,446	€1,231,286	€255,446	€1,231,286	€255,446	€1,231,286
Ballymun	€1,180,695	€1,145,274	€632,817	€488,098	€422,958	€697,957	€422,958	€697,957	€422,958	€697,957
Blanchardstown	€1,124,343	€1,090,613	€179,305	€913,589	€179,305	€913,589	€179,305	€913,589	€179,305	€913,589
Bray	€1,573,101	€1,525,908	€573,860	€916,271	€573,860	€916,271	€573,860	€916,271	€573,860	€916,271
Canal Communities	€1,562,243	€1,515,376	€338,605	€1,141,309	€338,605	€1,141,309	€338,605	€1,141,309	€338,605	€1,141,309
Clondalkin	€1,421,577	€1,428,930	€388,114	€1,007,948	€388,114	€1,007,948	€388,114	€1,007,948	€388,114	€1,007,948

Cork	€1,578,581	€1,531,224	€411,988	€1,108,299	€411,988	€1,108,299	€411,988	€1,108,299	€411,988	€1,108,299
Dublin 12	€1,120,360	€1,086,749	€74,013	€990,134	€70,997	€993,150	€70,397	€993,750	€70,397	€993,750
Dublin NE	€1,228,782	€988,234	€422,251	€594,836	€422,251	€594,836	€239,971	€777,116	€239,971	€777,116
Dun Laoghaire	€926,167	€898,382	€94,676	€786,755	€94,676	€786,755	€94,676	€786,755	€94,676	€786,755
Finglas Cabra	€936,590	€908,492	€263,277	€627,960	€263,277	€627,960	€263,277	€627,960	€263,277	€627,960
NIC	€2,369,624	€2,298,535	€576,956	€1,652,623	€494,856	€1,734,723	€394,856	€1,834,723	€394,856	€1,834,723
SIC	€2,161,821	€2,096,966	€255,720	€1,788,337	€176,043	€1,868,014	€176,043	€1,868,014	€176,043	€1,868,014
Tallaght	€1,250,347	€1,262,837	€452,712	€782,240	€341,438	€893,514	€336,022	€898,930	€336,022	€898,930
Total LDATF	€20,003,720	€19,299,924	€5,125,444	€13,823,981	€4,433,814	€14,515,611	€4,145,518	€14,803,907	€4,145,518	€14,803,907
RDATF	2012	2013	2014 DOH	2014 HSE	2015 DOH	2015 HSE	2016 DOH	2016 HSE	2017 DOH	2017 HSE
East Coast Area	€851,596	€584,227	€58,200	€508,500	€58,200	€508,500	€58,200	€508,500	€58,200	€508,500
Midland	€849,513	€824,028	€307,810	€491,497	€136,816	€662,491	€136,816	€662,491	€136,816	€662,491
Mid-West	€1,496,428	€1,451,535	€147,982	€1,260,007	€147,982	€1,260,007	€147,982	€1,260,007	€147,982	€1,260,007
North East	€986,091	€956,508	€0	€927,813	€0	€927,813	€0	€927,813	€0	€927,813
North West	€765,610	€742,642	€272,485	€447,878	€258,633	€461,730	€258,633	€461,730	€258,633	€461,730
North Dublin City & Co.	€826,087	€801,304	€456,080	€321,184	€309,778	€467,486	€266,245	€511,019	€266,245	€511,019
South East	€1,132,703	€1,098,722	€0	€1,065,760	€0	€1,065,760	€0	€1,065,760	€0	€1,065,760
South West	€849,524	€824,038	€102,820	€696,497	€102,820	€696,497	€102,820	€696,497	€102,820	€696,497
Southern	€1,034,305	€1,003,276	€0	€973,178	€0	€973,178	€0	€973,178	€0	€973,178
Western	€702,677	€681,597	€136,994	€524,155	€136,994	€524,155	€136,994	€524,155	€136,994	€524,155
Total RDATF	€9,494,534	€8,967,877	€1,482,371	€7,216,469	€1,151,223	€7,547,617	€1,107,690	€7,591,150	€1,107,690	€7,591,150
Overall Total	€29,498,254	€28,267,801		€27,648,265		€27,648,265		€27,648,265		€27,648,265

Note: LDATF - Local Drug And Task Force; RDATF - Regional Drug And Task Force.

Occupational Therapy

325. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health further to an assessment and diagnosis by the Health Service Executive, the number of children awaiting the services of an occupational therapist; the number of these children that are waiting for more than six months, one year and two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33447/17]

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.

Speech and Language Therapy Provision

326. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health further to an assessment and diagnosis by the Health Service Executive, the number of children currently awaiting the services of a speech therapist; the number of these children that are waiting for more than six months, one year and two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33448/17]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

327. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the steps he has taken to reduce

waiting lists for children and adolescents with scoliosis in the children's hospital group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33449/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In order to reduce the long waiting times for scoliosis surgery for children and young people, I asked the HSE to develop an Action Plan for 2017. The HSE Scoliosis Waiting List Update and Service Development Plan has been finalised and details of it are available on the HSE website. The Plan aims to ensure that no patient who requires spinal fusion or other scoliosis procedures will be waiting more than four months for surgery by the end of the year, where that is appropriate clinically. The HSE has advised the Department that every patient, including children under the age of 14, who needs to be treated in 2017, has been considered and is included in the overall plan for scoliosis services.

The Plan includes both measures to increase capacity in the children's hospitals as well as proposals to outsource some spinal procedures to other hospitals nationally and internationally. The Children's Hospital Group is monitoring progress made and is reporting to the Department on a weekly basis. Recent recruitment success has resulted in several new theatre nurses now in post in Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin. Additional nurses and a consultant surgeon are due to commence work shortly which will increase theatre capacity by three days a week since the beginning of the year.

While the Plan endeavours to deliver on short to medium term reduction in the waiting lists, in tandem the HSE is working to develop a long-term sustainable solution for scoliosis and paediatric orthopaedic cases. The numbers of patients on each of the waiting list categories is being taken into account in planning the future service requirements.

Hospital Staff

328. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the number of new paediatrics trained nurses placed in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin to deal with the waiting lists for children with scoliosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33450/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

329. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health if the planned orthopaedic surgeon post has been filled at Our Lady's children's hospital, Crumlin to deal with the waiting lists for children with scoliosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33451/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists

330. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on a waiting list for scoliosis surgery at Our Lady's children's hospital, Crumlin; the number of children that were waiting on a waiting list for scoliosis surgery in January, February, March, April, May and June of 2017, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33452/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service issues, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

National Drugs Strategy

331. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether the National Drugs Strategy will be published without debate in Dáil Éireann before being adapted as government policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33453/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): I recently received the final report of the National Drugs Strategy Steering Committee and earlier this week brought my proposals for a new strategy to Government, which have since been agreed. The strategy, which will provide a health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland, will be launched and published on Monday the 17 of July 2017.

Home Care Packages Data

332. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the number of home care package hours that were provided by the HSE in 2016 in the Dublin West HSE region; the number of home care package hours he plans to provide in this region in 2017; the budget spent on the provision of these hours in 2016; the budget provided for in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33454/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospitals Building Programme

333. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health when work will commence on the building of the new 100 bed unit at St. Patrick's hospital, Waterford (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33530/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Capital Programme announced in January 2016 provides for the replacement and refurbishment of 90 public nursing homes across the country over the next five years including St. Patrick's Hospital, Waterford. Under this Programme it is proposed to deliver a new build 100 bed community nursing home by mid-2019. This will replace existing beds where the physical environment requires substantial improvement.

The HSE has advised that it expects construction work to commence in Q3-Q4 2017.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Review

334. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the review of the fair deal scheme with specific reference to the treatment of family farms and small businesses in line with the commitment given in the programme for a partnership Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33547/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): 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.

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.

An Interdepartmental/Agency Working Group has been established to oversee the implementation of certain recommendations contained in the Review. This Group is chaired by the Department of Health and includes representatives from the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the HSE, the Revenue Commissioners, and when required, the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF). These recommendations include examining the treatment of business and farm assets for the purposes of the financial assessment element of the Scheme. This work is currently underway.

Subsequently, as noted by the Deputy, a commitment was included in the Programme for a Partnership Government to deal with this issue. This examination is ongoing and at an advanced stage.

An initial report on the progress of the NHSS Review recommendations was submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Health in September 2016.

It is important to remember that the NHSS is largely underpinned by primary legislation, and as such any changes to the Scheme will require legislative implementation. I have committed to prioritising and fast tracking this examination of family farms and businesses and bringing forward changes to the legislation to deal with the uncertainty that is being felt by farming and business families in line with the Programme for a Partnership Government.

Hospital Appointments Status

335. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will have an MRI at University Hospital Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33555/17]

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.

Mental Health Services Data

336. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff required and cost of meeting the staff allocation recommended in the *A Vision for Change* report for the child and adolescent mental health service in view of the population of children and young persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33568/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): In January 2006, the Government adopted the Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy *A Vision for Change* as the basis for the future development of mental health services in Ireland. The recommendations contained within *A Vision for Change* were based on Ireland's then population of 3.917 million, as indicated in the 2002 census. The population of Ireland today, based on the most recent Census figures for 2016, is 4.7 million.

The table outlines the number of Whole Time Equivalent staff numbers working in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as of April 2017, and the gap in staffing according to *A Vision for Change* recommendations adjusted for an increased population. Using an average figure of €66,000 per Whole Time Equivalent, the additional resources required to fill the 583 posts would be €38.5 million per annum.

Community Team Type	Community Health Organisation (CHO)	Whole Time Equivalents (WTE) at April 2017	% of A Vision for Change (adjusted for 2017 population)	WTE gap Per A Vision for Change
CAMHS	CHO 1	57	53%	51
	CHO 2	56	57%	50
	CHO 3	55	55%	45
	CHO 4	86	49%	90
	CHO 5	63	45%	75
	CHO 6	67	55%	54
	CHO 7	71	48%	77
	CHO 8	102	57%	76
	CHO 9	90	69%	52
	ALL	657	53%	583

Since 2012, €140 million in additional funding has been allocated to the Mental Health services. This has increased the total Mental Health Budget from €711 million in 2012 to over €850 million today. The increased investment in mental health services over the last number of years has helped to facilitate an increase in the number and staffing levels of both Adult, and Children & Adolescent Community Mental Health Teams. Of the additional 1,550 new mental health posts approved since 2012, some 1,150 have been, or are in the process of being recruited, notwithstanding the very challenging recruitment environment in which the HSE is operating. The HSE has prioritised the recruitment of staff required for its mental health services.

Question No. 337 answered with Question No. 263.

Fishing Industry

338. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he is taking to protect fishing interests further to the announcement by the British Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that the UK will leave

the London Fisheries Convention of 1964 which provides reciprocal fishing access rights for countries party to this agreement and in view of the large percentage of landings made from the UK exclusive economic zone by Irish boats; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33162/17]

339. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will meet an organisation (details supplied) to discuss the steps he is taking to protect west County Cork fishermen following the announcement that the UK will leave the London Fisheries Convention of 1964; the steps he will take to protect fishing interests in upcoming Brexit talks if the UK leaves the Common Fisheries Policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33165/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 338 and 339 together.

The action by the UK in announcing its withdrawal from the 1964 London Fisheries Convention was not unexpected. The UK Government had been intimating this decision for some time now. It is nonetheless unwelcome and unhelpful as it suggests a signal of the UK intent to take a hard line on fisheries in the context of Brexit.

However, there are no immediate direct impacts for the Irish fishing industry from this action as it will not take effect for two years. Any longer term impacts will only become clear in the overall context of the Brexit negotiations. It is the message of intent and the potential implications of that intent in the wider 12 to 200 mile zone that causes concern for the negotiations to come.

Under the Convention, the Irish fishing fleet has access to parts of the UK 6-12 mile zone while the UK fleet has similar access to parts of the Irish zone. The Irish fleet is not significantly dependant on this limited access.

I spoke with Secretary of State Michael Gove last week and stressed to him the importance of long established fishing patterns by the Irish fishing fleet and the importance of these being acknowledged and protected in the context of Brexit. I have previously discussed fisheries issues amongst other matters with his predecessor as Secretary of State, Andrea Leadsom, on two separate occasions. I have also discussed Fisheries, with a particular focus on the London Fishing Convention along with general access issues with Minister George Eustice during a meeting at the Luxembourg Agriculture Council on the 3rd of April.

For this Government there are two clear objectives when it comes to fisheries and Brexit – the maintenance of our existing quota shares and our existing rights of access. This has, and will continue to be, my overriding priority.

To achieve these objectives, we must have unity of purpose across the Member States directly concerned and across the fishing industry. Disunity will only strengthen those in the UK that seek to exclude all EU fleets. As the negotiations develop unilateral sectoral announcements, like this one, will be dealt with, as this will be, within the Brexit negotiation process and there will be no room, or indeed intent, to address issues in isolation.

I am working closely with our fishing industry and held a dedicated meeting on Brexit involving all the Fishing organisations representing both the catching and processing sectors just the other week in Galway.

I maintain close liaison with the four Producer Organisations IS&WFPO, KFO, IS&EFPO and IFPO. My officials are planning a meeting of the Sea Fisheries Liaison Group on the 19th of July which will involve further discussion with the POs on Brexit. I will remain in close

contact with fisheries stakeholders as the issues develop and work with them and my fellow fisheries Ministers in the EU to ensure that we are all fully prepared for what are likely to be extremely complex negotiations.

In terms of support to mitigate any potential impacts from Brexit for the fishing industry, my Department's €240 million EMFF Fund Operational Programme will directly assist the seafood sector to develop Brexit mitigation measures. The Programme provides €5 million to Bord Bia to supplement its normal seafood promotion work programme and this is allowing Bord Bia to have an Irish pavilion at many additional seafood trade fairs internationally. This can be expected to lead to new export markets for seafood enterprises, particularly in Asia, thus assisting the companies concerned in diversifying their market outlets.

Last October, as part of Budget 2017, I announced measures aimed at alleviating the pressures of income volatility and the potential impact of Brexit. These measures included an additional allocation of €1.6m in 2016 and €2m in 2017 to Bord Bia to ensure that they are in a position to provide Brexit-related supports to affected companies.

Earlier this year I awarded over €1.8 million in grants to 19 seafood enterprises under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme for the seafood sector. The aim of these grants is to incentivise seafood innovation and new product development as a means of meeting the Brexit challenge.

I am continuing my ongoing round of bilateral meetings with Fisheries Ministers of the impacted Member States and I plan to hold bilateral meetings with my French and Spanish counterparts next week.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Deputy that I will be unequivocal in opposing any dilution of our existing EU quota shares, including protecting the benefit to Ireland of the Hague Preferences, and any limitations on our existing rights of access.

Question No. 339 answered with Question No. 338.

Basic Payment Scheme Administration

340. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will review the EU basic payment scheme to include willow as one of the crops eligible for the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33178/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Under the Terms and Conditions of the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme, willow is included as an eligible crop.

TAMS Payments

341. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a TAMS payment for a person (details supplied). [33220/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A payment claim was submitted in this case. However, a number of deficiencies were identified with receipts and certificates submitted with the claim for payment. These issues need to be addressed before the payment claim can be processed for payment. The Department has been in direct contact with the person named and is awaiting a response to the queries raised.

State Bodies Data

342. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of roles unfilled in Bord Bia, the year in which these roles were made available, in tabular form; the nature of these roles; the number of these roles related to Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33305/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Brexit is a priority for Bord Bia and is central to all of its activities and programmes. The recruitment and allocation of staffing resources within delegated sanction levels is an operational matter for Bord Bia. The Deputy may wish to contact Bord Bia directly at the agreed Oireachtas contact address : info@bordbia.ie

Trade Missions Data

343. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of trade missions undertaken by his Department to date in 2017; the destination of these missions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33310/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The pursuit and development of new markets for Irish agri-food exports is of course an on going and central component of the strategic development of the agri-food sector, as evidenced by its placement right at the centre of Food Wise 2025, the industry's strategy for development over the coming decade. Indeed, this is all the more relevant after the UK's decision to leave the EU, which presents significant new challenges for the agri-food sector in particular.

Food Wise 2025 outlines the huge potential for growth in exports to new and emerging markets. In keeping with the priorities outlined in Food Wise 2025, I led a trade mission to the Gulf Region at the end of February 2017. This covered the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This mission served to enhance and improve our existing levels of market access in Saudi Arabia and the UAE and to raise the profile of Ireland as a producer of high quality food products.

In June of this year I also led an extensive trade mission to the US and Mexico. This trade mission was a great opportunity to strengthen our existing market presence in the United States, to deepen the existing footprint of the Irish food sector in Mexico, and establish a platform to develop new market opportunities for Irish beef and pigmeat there. It also allowed us crucial opportunities to meet representatives of the new US administration, and to gain a better understanding of their key policy priorities in the agri food sector, and to engage with political counterparts in Mexico as we endeavour to forge new opportunities for Irish food companies.

I am also considering a range of other destinations for the remainder of 2017.

In addition to trade missions, my Department will host a number of veterinary delegations this year to extend and maintain access to third country markets, its attachés in third countries are actively engaged in market access and trade promotion efforts, a senior veterinary official from my Department will shortly be participating in a promotional visit to Japan, and Bord Bia, with funding provided by my Department, will be represented at a number of high profile trade fairs both in third country and EU markets, in order to promote Irish produce.

Foreshore Issues

344. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the details of the research and investigations undertaken which led to the observation submitted by the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority in its role as a named external consultee advising the Minister for Housing, Planning Community and Local Government in relation to the foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33315/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): This is an operational matter for the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority. I have requested the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority to respond directly to the Deputy on the specific information requested.

Foreshore Issues

345. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has satisfied himself regarding the submitted observation, which stated that the authority had no observations to make in relation to the foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway Bay. [33316/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The application referred to by the Deputy was referred to my Department by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government for observations.

The observations forwarded by my Department, and which are referred to by the Deputy, were made following an examination by my Department of the application in question.

Foreshore Issues

346. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the details of the research and investigations undertaken which led to the observation submitted by An Bord Iascaigh Mhara, in its role as a named external consultee, advising the Minister for Housing, Planning Community and Local Government in relation to the foreshore lease planning application on Galway Bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33317/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): This is an operational matter for Bord Iascaigh Mhara. I have requested Bord Iascaigh Mhara to respond directly to the Deputy on the specific information requested.

Foreshore Issues

347. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has satisfied himself regarding the submitted observation of An Bord Iascaigh Mhara, in relation to the foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway Bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33318/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): This is an operational matter for Bord Iascaigh Mhara. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to comment on such a submission.

Brexit Issues

348. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33332/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Ever since the announcement by the UK of its decision to hold a referendum on its continued membership of the EU, my Department and its agencies have conducted extensive analysis to assess the likely impact that a UK withdrawal would have on the Irish agri food sector, including fisheries and forestry. This work has been complemented by extensive consultation with stakeholders through the Department's Stakeholder Consultative Committee and through the All-Island Civic Dialogue process, in respect of which I have already hosted five agri-food and fisheries sectorial dialogues.

While the main impact to date of the Brexit vote has come in the form of the fall in the value of sterling against the euro and its effect on those businesses that have a significant trading relationship with the UK, the medium- to long-term threats include the possible introduction of tariffs on trade between the EU and UK, potential divergences in regulations and standards between the EU and UK post-Brexit, and the implications of border controls and certification requirements. Difficult challenges also arise in relation to potentially restricted access to fishing grounds and resources.

My Department has been conducting this analysis and consultation within the whole-of-Government approach to the Brexit negotiations that is being coordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach. Following on from publication in early May of the Position Paper setting out the Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations, work is under way across departments to prepare adaptive Sectoral Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders, and will encompass the following themes:

- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;
- Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;
- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;
- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;
- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

All of this work is ongoing and must also respond to the emerging developments in the Brexit negotiations. There is no decision as yet on publication dates.

Departmental Reviews

349. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to the two ongoing reviews of fisheries policies in his Department on mackerel allocations and on fleet capacity, the date on which he will make a decision on the fleet capacity submissions in view of the fact that the mackerel consultation impacts only 2.5% of the entire fleet and the

fleet capacity consultation impacts 100% of it; if he will ensure that the resourcing of the two review processes reflects the true impact of each review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33363/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In relation to the Review of Replacement Capacity Requirements under Sea Fishing Boat Licensing Policy, under the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2003, the functions of sea-fishing boat licensing were transferred from the Minister to the Licensing Authority for Sea-fishing Boats, which operates on an independent basis subject to criteria set out in that Act and Ministerial Policy Directives.

As Minister I have responsibility for policy in relation to sea-fishing boat licensing under Section 3(3) of the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2003, as amended by Section 99 of the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006. In this context, and as referred to above, Section 3 of the Act makes provision for Ministerial Policy Directives to issue to the independent Licensing Authority for Sea-fishing Boats. I am, however, precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to individual cases, or a group of cases, with which the Licensing Authority is or may be concerned under Section 3(5) of the 2003 Act.

I received proposals from a Producer Organisation (PO) which, in summary, relate to the possibility of reducing the requirement to provide 100% replacement capacity with the relevant track record to 80% (the balance being sourced from capacity without track record). I undertook a public consultation process on these proposals and made a consultation paper available which set out the background to fleet policy and carried out an analysis of the current situation. The consultation paper examined the implications of the proposals made by the Producer Organisation and also put forward alternative options. This consultation ended on 28 February 2017.

26 submissions were received in this regard and they are currently being examined. I will carefully consider, following any further analysis needed, the case for amendment(s) to current licensing policy taking into account the submissions received. I will have my conclusions published on the Department's website, as early as possible.

In relation to resources, on the Review of Mackerel allocation policy between the fleet segments, I can inform the Deputy that within the Seafood Policy and Management Division of my Department, the work involved is being undertaken, with a range of other responsibilities, by one Principal Officer, one Assistant Principal Officer, one Higher Executive Officer and one Executive Officer and is being overseen by one Assistant Secretary. During the consultation period for this review, 318 individual submissions and 35 representations were received.

Work on the Review of Replacement Capacity Requirements under Sea Fishing Boat Licensing Policy within the Seafood Policy and Management Division is being undertaken, with a range of other responsibilities, by one Principal Officer, one Assistant Principal Officer and one Higher Executive Officer and is being overseen by one Assistant Secretary. One Clerical Officer has also assisted in this work.

I am satisfied that sufficient resources have been allocated to the work arising from both reviews.

Brexit Issues

350. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to support Ireland's fisheries industry to mitigate the impact of Brexit in view of the UK's plans to leave the London Fisheries Convention. [32100/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The action by the UK in announcing its withdrawal from the 1964 London Fisheries Convention was not unexpected. The UK Government had been intimating this decision for some time now. It is nonetheless unwelcome and unhelpful as it suggests a signal of the UK intent to take a hard line on fisheries in the context of Brexit.

However, there are no immediate direct impacts for the Irish fishing industry from this action as it will not take effect for two years. Any longer term impacts will only become clear in the overall context of the Brexit negotiations. It is the message of intent and the potential implications of that intent in the wider 12 to 200 mile zone that causes concern for the negotiations to come.

Under the Convention, the Irish fishing fleet has access to parts of the UK 6-12 mile zone while the UK fleet has similar access to parts of the Irish zone. The Irish fleet is not significantly dependant on this limited access.

I spoke with Secretary of State Michael Gove last week and stressed to him the importance of long established fishing patterns by the Irish fishing fleet and the importance of these being acknowledged and protected in the context of Brexit. I have previously discussed fisheries issues amongst other matters with his predecessor as Secretary of State, Andrea Leadsom, on two separate occasions. I have also discussed Fisheries, with a particular focus on the London Fishing Convention along with general access issues with Minister George Eustice during a meeting at the Luxembourg Agriculture Council on 3 April.

For this Government there are two clear objectives when it comes to fisheries and Brexit – the maintenance of our existing quota shares and our existing rights of access. This has, and will continue to be, my overriding priority.

To achieve these objectives, we must have unity of purpose across the Member States directly concerned and across the fishing industry. Disunity will only strengthen those in the UK that seek to exclude all EU fleets.

As the negotiations develop unilateral sectoral announcements, like this one, will be dealt with, as this will be, within the Brexit negotiation process and there will be no room, or indeed intent, to address issues in isolation.

I am working closely with our fishing industry and held a detailed public discussion with stakeholders just the other week in Galway. I will remain in close contact with fisheries stakeholders as the issues develop and work with them and my fellow fisheries Ministers in the EU to ensure that we are all fully prepared for what are likely to be extremely complex negotiations.

In terms of support to mitigate any potential impacts from Brexit for the fishing industry, my Department's €240 million EMFF Fund Operational Programme will directly assist the seafood sector to develop Brexit mitigation measures. The Programme provides €5 million to Bord Bia to supplement its normal seafood promotion work programme and this is allowing Bord Bia to have an Irish pavilion at many additional seafood trade fairs internationally. This can be expected to lead to new export markets for seafood enterprises, particularly in Asia, thus assisting the companies concerned in diversifying their market outlets.

Last October, as part of Budget 2017, I announced measures aimed at alleviating the pressures of income volatility and the potential impact of Brexit. These measures included an additional allocation of €2m in 2017 to Bord Bia to ensure that they are in a position to provide Brexit-related supports to affected companies.

Earlier this year I awarded over €1.8 million in grants to 19 seafood enterprises under the

European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme for the seafood sector. The aim of these grants is to incentivise seafood innovation and new product development as a means of meeting the Brexit challenge.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Deputy that I will be unequivocal in opposing any dilution of our existing EU quota shares, including protecting the benefit to Ireland of the Hague Preferences, and any limitations on our existing rights of access.

Departmental Reviews

351. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when he appointed the steering committee to manage the review of his Department's inspection regime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33410/17]

352. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the person he appointed to the steering committee to manage the review of his Department's inspection regime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33411/17]

353. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons appointed to the steering committee to manage the review of his Department's inspection regime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33412/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 351 to 353, inclusive, together.

My Department is obliged under EU regulations to undertake clearly specified number of inspections annually for both eligibility and cross compliance. As required by the EU, cases for inspection are selected by risk analysis, with cases selected both randomly and by risk. The selection process is carried out by headquartered staff using 'national' data sets.

The risk categories used take account of the land types, number and scale of enterprises, number of livestock and previous inspection history. The Department is required to review the performance of the risk analysis annually and, where appropriate, to update the risks to be used in the following year.

All of these inspection processes are the subject of detailed regular reviews by EU auditors.

All inspections are subject to continuous oversight by supervisors and random verification inspections to ensure a consistent approach throughout the country. Compliance by Department officials with inspection commitments set out in the Farmers Charter of Rights, agreed between the Department and the farming organisations, is reviewed regularly by the independently chaired Farmers Charter Monitoring Committee. Furthermore inspections are subject to repeated audits by the European Commission, the European Court of Auditors, the Certifying Body and the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office, to ensure full compliance with the requirements.

I and my Department recognises that farmers can become very concerned about inspections. For this reason, my Department makes every effort to explain the nature and process of inspections, and the requirements of the EU and national schemes, to farmers. My Department will be increasing its efforts in this regard and is happy to work with the farm organisations and others in this process.

On the matter of the appointment of a Steering Committee, the review in question is a re-

view of the Agriculture Appeals Act 2001, not a review of the Department's inspection regime. This is in line with the commitment given in the Programme for Partnership Government that there would be a review of the Agriculture Appeals Act 2001 "to ensure the independence and efficiency of the Office in dealing with appeals from farmers". As I stated last month I intend to establish a Steering Committee to oversee the delivery of the commitment. The Committee will include independent experts. It is anticipated that the Committee will also invite stakeholder input to the process. It is expected that the review will be completed by the end of this year.

Brexit Negotiations

354. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has spoken to his counterpart in the UK Government regarding the intentions of the UK to withdraw from the London Fisheries Convention 1964 also known as the European Fisheries Convention; and his views on the impact this may have on Ireland's fishing industry. [33011/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The action by the UK in announcing its withdrawal from the 1964 London Fisheries Convention was not unexpected. The UK Government had been intimating this decision for some time now. It is nonetheless unwelcome and unhelpful as it suggests a signal of the UK intent to take a hard line on fisheries in the context of Brexit.

However, there are no immediate direct impacts for the Irish fishing industry from this action as it will not take effect for two years. Any longer term impacts will only become clear in the overall context of the Brexit negotiations. It is the message of intent and the potential implications of that intent in the wider 12 to 200 mile zone that causes concern for the negotiations to come.

Under the Convention, the Irish fishing fleet has access to parts of the UK 6-12 mile zone while the UK fleet has similar access to parts of the Irish zone. The Irish fleet is not significantly dependant on this limited access.

I spoke with Secretary of State Michael Gove last week and stressed to him the importance of long established fishing patterns by the Irish fishing fleet and the importance of these being acknowledged and protected in the context of Brexit. I have previously discussed fisheries issues amongst other matters with his predecessor as Secretary of State, Andrea Leadsom, on two separate occasions. I have also discussed Fisheries, with a particular focus on the London Fishing Convention along with general access issues with Minister George Eustice during a meeting at the Luxembourg Agriculture Council on 3 April.

For this Government there are two clear objectives when it comes to fisheries and Brexit – the maintenance of our existing quota shares and our existing rights of access. This has, and will continue to be, my overriding priority.

To achieve these objectives, we must have unity of purpose across the Member States directly concerned and across the fishing industry. Disunity will only strengthen those in the UK that seek to exclude all EU fleets.

As the negotiations develop unilateral sectoral announcements, like this one, will be dealt with, as this will be, within the Brexit negotiation process and there will be no room, or indeed intent, to address issues in isolation.

I am working closely with our fishing industry and held a detailed public discussion with stakeholders just the other week in Galway. I maintain close liaisons with the four Producer

Organisations IS&WFPO, KFO, IS&EFPO and the IFPO. I will remain in close contact with fisheries stakeholders as the issues develop and work with them and my fellow fisheries Ministers in the EU to ensure that we are all fully prepared for what are likely to be extremely complex negotiations.

In terms of support to mitigate any potential impacts from Brexit for the fishing industry, my Department's €240 million EMFF Fund Operational Programme will directly assist the seafood sector to develop Brexit mitigation measures. The Programme provides €5 million to Bord Bia to supplement its normal seafood promotion work programme and this is allowing Bord Bia to have an Irish pavilion at many additional seafood trade fairs internationally. This can be expected to lead to new export markets for seafood enterprises, particularly in Asia, thus assisting the companies concerned in diversifying their market outlets.

Last October, as part of Budget 2017, I announced measures aimed at alleviating the pressures of income volatility and the potential impact of Brexit. These measures included an additional allocation of €2m in 2017 to Bord Bia to ensure that they are in a position to provide Brexit-related supports to affected companies.

Earlier this year I awarded over €1.8 million in grants to 19 seafood enterprises under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme for the seafood sector. The aim of these grants is to incentivise seafood innovation and new product development as a means of meeting the Brexit challenge.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Deputy that I will be unequivocal in opposing any dilution of our existing EU quota shares, including protecting the benefit to Ireland of the Hague Preferences, and any limitations on our existing rights of access.

Fisheries Protection

355. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding mussel and seed fishing using boats from Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33543/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The mussel seed fishery is managed on an all-island basis, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland (DAERA NI) and the cross-border Loughs Agency. To fish for mussel seed, Irish-registered sea-fishing boats require an authorisation under section 13 of the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006. Authorisations are only provided to those boats which are directly connected with a bottom grown mussel aquaculture operator who holds a mussel seed "allocation" for his or her aquaculture site or boats that are contracted to fish on behalf of same. An allocation restricts the amount (tonnes) of mussel seed that may be relayed onto a given site. Boats from Northern Ireland require equivalent licenses from DAERA NI to take part in the fishery and must meet corresponding regulatory requirements.

As the Deputy is aware on 27 October 2016, the Supreme Court issued a judgment in a case taken by a number of mussel seed fishermen (Barlow & ors -v- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine & ors [2016] IESC 62, 27 October 2016). In the judgment, the Supreme Court found that fishing by Northern Ireland boats within the 0 to 6 nautical mile zone of the territorial waters of the State under the Voisinage arrangements is not permitted by law. The Voisinage Arrangements are long-standing reciprocal arrangements which allow fishing boats from Northern Ireland access to fish within the 0 to 6 nautical mile zone of the territorial waters

of the State and vice versa.

It is important to note that the Supreme Court upheld the High Court finding that the Voisinage Arrangements are not invalid but that, as it stands, there is insufficient provision for them in domestic law. The Supreme Court in fact noted that the arrangements were a sensible recognition at official level of practice and tradition, where fishing boats traditionally fished neighbouring waters.

The application of the judgment is to all fishing by Northern Irish fishing boats in the 0 to 6 nautical mile zone relying on the Voisinage Arrangements. Fishing activities that have a legal basis are not affected, such as those reliant on the access arrangements to Ireland's 6 to 12 nautical mile zone set out in Regulation (EU) No. 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The Government approved the publication of the Sea-Fisheries (Amendment) Bill to address issues raised by the Supreme Court judgment of 27 October 2016, in so far as it relates to access for NI vessels. If enacted and commenced, the Bill will give the Voisinage Arrangements a proper legal footing. The Bill was published in February 2017 and is available on the Oireachtas website. The Bill has been debated in the Seanad and now is at Committee Stage there.

While the Bill proposes to restore access to Northern Ireland boats to fish, under the terms of the Voisinage Arrangements, boats that make use of this access are subject to the same rules and conditions that apply to Irish sea-fishing boats. The Bill itself does not apply the specific conditions. Therefore, other parallel associated measures will be required to ensure that rules and conditions in place for Irish sea-fishing boats are appropriately applied to Northern Ireland boats fishing under the Voisinage Arrangements.

The process of identifying which conditions may need to be applied is under way. The conditions will include such restrictions as currently apply to Irish sea-fishing boats. When the necessary measures have been identified, the most appropriate mechanisms for applying them to Northern Ireland boats will be determined. The objective will be for these measures to come into effect at the same time as a commencement order for the Bill.

Together, the Bill and the associated measures will re-establish the status quo for fishing access that existed under the Voisinage Arrangements before the Supreme Court's judgment on 27 October 2016. The only difference will be that the Voisinage Arrangements will be provided for within a legislative framework.

Nitrates Usage

356. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the review being undertaken by his Department of the nitrates directive; the measures he can take to provide greater flexibility, reduced penalties and more workable regulations for persons under this directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33545/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG) is the lead authority in undertaking the review, assisted by my Department. The third review of Ireland's Nitrates Action Plan (NAP) commenced in early 2017; the NAP is designed to prevent pollution from agricultural sources to protect and improve water quality in order to meet the EU Water Framework Directive obligations.

As part of the NAP review, a public consultation has taken place; 28 submissions were received including submissions from farmers and farming organisations. All the submissions have been reviewed and considered by the Expert Group, consisting of personnel from DHP-CLG, Teagasc, EPA and my Department. These will form the basis for proposals to the Commission for a new Nitrates Action Programme; it is required that the proposals must have a scientific basis.

The objective is to agree with the European Commission a fourth NAP which will run from 2018 to 2021. Ireland will also be seeking the renewal of the nitrates derogation for the period 2018 to 2021. The derogation allows more intensive farmers to exceed the limit of 170 kg/ha nitrogen from livestock, and the continuance of the derogation is considered vital to achieve targets set out under Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025.

As regards nitrates penalties, my Department is regularly communicating with farmers including providing Nitrogen and Phosphorus statements and issuing text messages to those farmers who may be close to their nitrates limits in order to aid compliance with regulatory requirements. The €100m Knowledge Transfer Scheme which has over 20,000 participating farmers includes a focus on environmental sustainability and in helping farmers pursue best practice, thereby reducing the risks of non-compliance and penalties. My Department and the DHPCLG will continue in assessing opportunities to assist farmers in complying with the regulatory requirements; however it will be imperative that water quality is protected and that Ireland meets the Water Framework Directive obligations.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

357. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on a review of an AEOS final year contract payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33554/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The final year of the AEOS 2 contract of the person named was due to end at the end of 2016. However, the herdowner applied for GLAS and was accepted into that scheme with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016, therefore, replacing the AEOS contract.

The person named subsequently withdrew from the GLAS contract at a late stage.

Following a review, and in light of the particular set of unique circumstances of this case, a decision has been made to allow the AEOS contract to run to its full term. Payment of monies relating to the AEOS 2016 scheme year will be issued to the person named shortly.

Hedge Cutting Season

358. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of warnings issued over the past three years in respect of hedge cutting; the number of notices issued by local authorities in respect of tree and hedge cutting along public roads on health and safety grounds [33570/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Hedge cutting along public roads for health and safety purposes is controlled under the Roads Act (under the remit of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport) and managed at county level by local authorities. As such, local authorities are responsible for the issuance of any related warn-

ing letters on public health and safety grounds and my Department has no statutory functions regarding the issuing of warning letters/notices under the Roads Act.

Departmental Bodies

359. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a tourism group (details supplied) in County Donegal is under the remit of his Department; if not, the type of legal entity it is; the persons on the board of management, including the chair, vice chair, secretary and treasurer; the time they have been in the positions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33242/17]

360. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of times the board of management of a tourism group (details supplied) have met; the members of the group; the funding model of the group; the amount or investment the group has received to date in 2017; the source of funding; if Inland Fisheries Ireland has invested money in the group; the amount invested to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33243/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Kyne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 359 and 360 together.

The group in question is a not for profit organisation, which does not come under the remit of my Department or Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI). IFI contributed €25,000 to the group to support the roll out of the Donegal Angling Pilot. This included the development of a brand, website and other promotional activities through the group. IFI also has a contract with the group to operate the website www.donegalanglingholidays.com. As the group in question does not come under the remit of my Department, the other information sought by the Deputy has not been reported to the Department.

Waste Management

361. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the steps that have been taken to ensure that robust controls are in place in order that only fit and proper persons and companies are allowed to hold waste permits and that appropriate corporate governance arrangements are implemented as promised in *A Resource Opportunity*; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33159/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The regulatory regime around waste collection has been significantly strengthened since the publication of *A Resource Opportunity* and robust controls to ensure that only “fit and proper” individuals and companies are allowed to hold waste collection permits have been put in place. Section 34D of the Waste Management Act, 1996, as inserted by the Environment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2015, sets out the ‘fit and proper person’ test in primary legislation and was commenced on 31 August, 2015. In brief, Section 34D of Waste Management Act, 1996, stipulates, *inter alia*, that a person is not fit and proper to hold a waste collection permit if she or he:

- has been convicted of offences set out in Section 34D(a) of the Waste Management Act, 1996;
- has had a permit revoked under Section 34A of the Waste Management Act, 1996, save where such a permit was surrendered;

- has had a Court Order made against them under Section 57 or 58 of the Waste Management Act, 1996;
- does not have the requisite technical knowledge or qualifications to carry on the activity in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Management Act, 1996 and the conditions of the waste collection permit; or
- is not in a position to meet financial commitments or liabilities that will be entered into or incurred to which the waste collection permit relates.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

362. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when broadband services will be available under national broadband scheme at Sarsfieldstown, Julianstown, County Meath. [33177/17]

363. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if broadband roll-out is still scheduled to take place in Ballymore, County Westmeath later in 2017; and will the Minister give a definite timeframe for this work. [33184/17]

365. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding fibre broadband in an area (details supplied) and the surrounding areas in which a company has a unit installed in the village to facilitate the provision of broadband for 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33240/17]

367. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the accuracy of the national broadband plan map; the factors which may reduce the accuracy of this map; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33306/17]

375. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the progress to date in the provision of high quality broadband in all areas throughout County Kildare without exception; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33497/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 362, 363, 365, 367 and 375 together.

The Government's National Broadband Plan will provide high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector so that to date approximately 1.4m or 61% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland can get high speed broadband of a minimum of 30 Megabits per second and this footprint is expanding.

In April, eir signed a agreement with me committing them to follow through on their commercial plans to provide new high speed broadband infrastructure to 300,000 premises in rural areas. eir has committed to doing this work over a 90 week period with an average of 500 premises passed per day. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department's website www.dccae.gov.ie. The decision by eir to invest in infrastructure to deploy high speed broadband services to an additional 300,000 premises in rural Ireland was taken by eir on commercial grounds. Neither I nor the Department have a statutory authority to direct eir in this regard.

Quarterly updates on progress of the eir 300k roll-out will be published on my Department's website. The Q1 figures have been verified by my Department and the eir roll-out is in line with the Commitment Agreement.

In April I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This map finalises the State Intervention Area for the procurement process and is an important milestone in the procurement process. The Map shows the extent of the State Intervention area and also the areas targeted for commercial services. The Map, which is searchable by address or eircode, has been developed by my Department using extensive information obtained from commercial operators and will be updated to show quarterly progress of the eir roll-out.

- The BLUE areas represent those areas where commercial telecommunications providers are either currently delivering or have indicated plans to deliver high speed broadband services,
- The AMBER areas on the High Speed Broadband Map represent the areas that will require State Intervention and are the subject of the current procurement process.

There are 89,565 premises in County Kildare, 13,371 or 15% of which fall within an AMBER area on the map and so will be covered by the State led Intervention under the NBP. The remaining 76,194 are BLUE area premises with 9,131 of these included in eir's 300K rural roll-out (showing as LIGHT BLUE on the map).

54% of the premises in Sarsfieldstown in Julianstown County Meath fall within an AMBER area and will be part of the State led Intervention under the NBP. The remaining 46% will be covered by the eir 300k roll-out.

The breakdown in the townland of Ballymore, County Westmeath includes 98% falling within the eir 300k coverage areas with the remaining 2% being covered by the State Intervention.

Information on eir's planned rural deployment is available from eir at <http://fibrerollout.ie/eircode-lookup/>.

The village of Castlebaldwin, County Sligo falls entirely within a BLUE area and will be provided by commercial operators.

I encourage members of the general public who are in a BLUE area but who cannot access a high speed broadband service to contact my Department at broadband@dcae.gov.ie, quoting their eircode and query details.

Information on whether specific premises are in a BLUE or AMBER area can be obtained by accessing the High Speed Broadband Map and entering the premises Eircode at www.broadband.gov.ie.

My Department is 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. The State Intervention network will be a wholesale network and retail service providers will be able to use the network to provide enhanced broadband services to their customers.

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 three bidders have indicated that they are proposing a predominantly fibre-to-the-home solution. A fibre-to-the-home solution means that householders and businesses may get speeds not just of 30 Megabits per second but much higher, potentially up to 1000 Megabits per second.

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With the finalisation of the map and following extensive dialogue with bidders, the procurement is progressing to the next stage. On 20 June 2017 my Department wrote to the three bidders in the NBP procurement process inviting them to submit their “Detailed Solutions” by 26 September 2017. The ‘Detailed Solutions’ stage is the last stage of the procurement process before Final Tenders.

The timeframe for 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. The Department will engage with winning bidder(s) on the best roll-out strategy, in order to target areas of particularly poor service, business needs and/or high demand.

The rate of demand for data services has increased exponentially in the last four years and this presents a continuing challenge for telecommunication operators, regulators and policy makers both in Ireland and internationally. Recognising this challenge, I specifically included in the Programme for Government a commitment to a Mobile Phone and Broadband Task force. In July 2016, I established the Task Force to identify immediate solutions to broadband and mobile phone coverage deficits and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers, prior to the full build and roll-out of the network planned under the National Broadband Plan State intervention. The report of the Task Force was published in December and is available on my Department’s website.

In producing this report, the Task Force worked with Departments, local authorities, Com-Reg, State agencies, the telecoms industry and other key stakeholders. The report contains 40 actions that will alleviate some of the telecommunications deficits across Ireland and the implementation programme on mobile phone and broadband access identifies 19 of these actions as areas where immediate and direct action by Departments and State agencies can ensure accelerated benefits to consumers.

In order to maintain momentum created by the Task Force, I established an Implementation Group to drive and monitor the implementation of the actions, bringing together all key stakeholders identified in the Task Force report with responsibility for delivery. This group will be formally reporting every 90 days on progress made on all actions. I published the first such quarterly progress report on 13 June 2017, which is available on my Department’s website at <http://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Taskforce%20Q1%20Progress%20Report.pdf> and which shows that considerable progress has been made, particularly in relation to the implementation of actions identified for Q1 2017.

The work of the Task Force will also assist local authorities in preparing for the roll-out of the new NBP network once contracts are in place.

In addition, following regulations which I signed last year, ComReg recently announced the results of its auction for the 3.6GHz radio spectrum band, which means an 86% increase in spectrum capacity to meet the growing demand for mobile and wireless broadband services across rural and urban areas. The Regulator has awarded 15 year licences for the rights of use in this band which will provide a degree of stability and create future investment certainty. Spectrum was also awarded in lots covering 9 urban and rural regions across the country.

In my Department’s Estimates for 2017, I have secured an €8 million provision for RTE to allow it to free up the 700 MHz spectrum band. ComReg in turn will make plans to allocate this spectrum to provide for significantly enhanced mobile coverage. The 700 MHz band is particularly suited to rural environments where the signal can travel long distances.

These initiatives should assist in enhancing the quality of mobile phone and data services across Ireland and particularly in rural Ireland.

Waste Management Regulations

364. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a bin company's contracts with customers give the company permission to access customers' homes without their knowledge or approval; his views on this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33196/17]

366. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on plans by a waste company (details supplied) to levy hefty fines on customers for contaminated waste in view of the fact that the same company's terms and conditions forbids tampering with bins, meaning locks to same cannot be affixed, and therefore persons cannot fully control the type of waste that may be placed in their bins by third parties on the street. [33244/17]

377. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the regulation in place to allow a waste company impose a fine for waste incorrectly placed in the wrong coloured bin. [33532/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 364, 366 and 377 together.

The terms and conditions of consumer contracts do not fall within my remit as Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. It is my understanding that the issues raised are the subject of terms and conditions of private contracts between householders and household waste collection companies.

It is also my understanding that the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) has worked with the waste sector to try to ensure operators' terms and conditions are transparent and do not contain any unfair terms. The CCPC also offers useful advice for householders entering new contracts available to download at <https://www.ccpc.ie/consumers/contracts-and-services/waste-collection/>.

Similarly, the CCPC has produced a guide for household waste collectors to make operators aware that the service provided is a commercial practice and, as such, is subject to a number of laws, available to download at <https://www.ccpc.ie/business/help-for-business/guidelines-for-business/domestic-waste-collection-sector/>.

As I have already stated, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission will be asked to report on the operation of the household waste collection market in order to inform the future development of national waste management policy before year end.

Question No. 365 answered with Question No. 362.

Question No. 366 answered with Question No. 364.

Question No. 367 answered with Question No. 362.

Foreshore Issues

368. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details of the research and investigations undertaken which led to the observation submitted by the Geological Survey of Ireland in its role as a named external consultee, advising the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in

respect of the foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33319/17]

369. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has satisfied himself regarding the submitted observation in respect of the foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway Bay which stated that the Geological Survey had no observations to make; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33320/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Kyne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 368 and 369 together.

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) is a consultee on Foreshore Licence applications as they act as the state agency in relation to aspects of geoscience including marine geology and geological heritage. In particular, GSI jointly manage INFOMAR, the Irish national seabed mapping programme, and have expertise in marine geology. In reviewing the application, the area in question has been the subject of detailed marine mapping and geophysical surveys and there were no issues with the quality of the seabed and marine mapping data, which had been acquired to INFOMAR standards, and no perceived issues in relation to marine geology. In addition, the adjacent onshore area has no issues in relation to geological heritage. The reports also referenced the GSI data sources for the area and was deemed to be comprehensive and accurate in relation to marine geology and geological heritage, therefore, no observations were offered.

Foreshore Licence Applications

370. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has satisfied himself regarding the submitted observation in respect of the foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway Bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33322/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Foreshore licensing issues are a matter for the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government under the Foreshore Acts.

The case as referred to by the Deputy relates to an application by the Marine Institute to that Minister for the renewal of a lease for the Marine and Renewable Energy test site at Galway Bay, not for the construction of an electricity generating station. Details of the lease application are available on the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government website.

As Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, I have no role in relation to the preparation of submissions by consultees under the Foreshore Acts, including submissions by statutory bodies under the aegis of my Department.

Foreshore Licence Applications

371. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has satisfied himself regarding the submitted observation in respect of the foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway Bay given that the Commission had no comment to make; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33324/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Foreshore licensing issues are a matter for the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government under the Foreshore Acts.

The case as referred to by the Deputy relates to an application by the Marine Institute to that Minister for the renewal of a lease for the Marine and Renewable Energy test site at Galway Bay, not for the construction of an electricity generating station. Details of the lease application are available on the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government website.

As Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, I have no role in relation to the preparation of submissions by consultees under the Foreshore Acts, including submissions by statutory bodies and independent regulators under the aegis of my Department.

Brexit Documents

372. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33335/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): On 2 May, the Government published a comprehensive document on Ireland and the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. Following publication, work is underway across departments to prepare adaptive Sectoral Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges.

These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders, and will encompass the following five cross government themes:

- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;
- Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;
- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;
- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;
- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

As the Deputy is aware, my Department has a broad remit including telecommunications, energy, climate, broadcasting and environment.

My Department has identified energy as the highest priority sector and has published on its website a summary of Brexit energy priorities. Principal amongst these are maintenance of secure energy trading between the UK and EU Member States and maintaining the Single Electricity Market across the island of Ireland. The on-going work in my Department identifies potential impacts across each sector, defines specific priorities for the Brexit process and examines policy recommendations

My Department is working across the policy areas for which it is responsible to continue to develop our analysis in order to prepare for Brexit and minimise the potential impacts on Ireland.

Waste Management Regulations

373. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will reverse the proposal that the provision of a green, black and brown bin is to be restricted to areas with a population density of greater than 500 in view of the fact that it is discriminating against rural dwellers that wish to recycle and manage the cost of their waste disposal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33419/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Household kerbside waste collectors are required by a condition in their waste collection permit to provide a separate receptacle for each waste fraction namely, residual, recyclables and where appropriate, food and bio-waste.

In line with the objectives of the national waste policy, A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland, in terms of maximising the resource potential and minimising the disposal of our waste, the European Union (Household Food Waste and Bio-waste) Regulations 2015 are designed to promote the segregation and recovery of household food waste. The Regulations impose obligations on both waste collectors and householders.

Under articles 4 and 5 of the Regulations, household waste collectors are required to provide, or arrange for the provision of, a separate collection service for food waste from households for population agglomerations greater than 500 persons. This started out as agglomerations of greater than 25,000 persons and has been reduced on a phased basis.

A food waste collection service is now being provided in every county across all local authority areas. The provision of this service to more remote areas with agglomerations less than 500 persons, where it is technically and environmentally practical to do so, continues to be monitored by my Department, together with the regulatory authorities.

Departmental Advertising Campaigns

374. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to roll out an information awareness campaign to inform persons of plans to ban flat rate bin charges in the future; and if so, when he plans on doing so; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33439/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Regional Waste Management Planning Offices commenced a programme of education and awareness funded by my Department in March 2017 with radio advertisements encouraging the use of brown bin and focusing on food waste prevention which ran from throughout March 2017. This was backed up with social media campaigns to further encourage the use of the brown bin.

The Regional Waste Management Planning Offices will continue to roll out waste awareness and education initiatives in the second half of this year, re-focussing on the use of the brown bin, but also concentrating on improving and increasing recycling, waste prevention and the correct use of the kerbside collection system. In terms of the timing of a campaign to inform

people about the phase out of flat rate fees, it is intended that this will begin before the end of July 2017.

Question No. 375 answered with Question No. 362.

Waste Management Regulations

376. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the waste which can lawfully be disposed of in a black bin, a green bin and a brown bin, respectively. [33531/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The European Union (Household Food Waste and Bio-waste) Regulations 2015, (S.I. 430 of 2015) are designed to promote the segregation and recovery of household food waste. Regulations 6 and 7 impose obligations on householders, which *inter alia*, require householders who avail of a household waste collection service, and are supplied with a food waste bin in line with the Regulations, to place food waste in the food waste bin. Alternatively, a householder may subject the food waste to a home composting process or bring the food to an appropriate authorised waste facility. A collector may also offer a service to collect garden and/or other suitable bio-waste in the food waste bin. Further information is available to download at <http://www.brownbins.ie/>.

The Seventh Schedule to the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations 2007, (S.I. 820 of 2007) as amended, requires kerbside household waste collectors to accept a minimum list of recyclable household waste materials. Collectors also may accept additional mixed dry recyclable household waste items.

Residual household kerbside waste, as defined in the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations 2007, (S.I. 820 of 2007) as amended, which is not food waste or recyclable household waste, should be placed in the residual bin.

A campaign developed by the Regional Waste Management Planning Offices focusing on reducing food waste generation and also encouraging the use of brown bin was run in March 2017, comprising of radio and cinema advertisements and backed up by a social media campaign. Further campaigns will be rolled out over the second half of 2017 addressing issues such as food waste, waste prevention, how per lift and weight based charging models work and increasing and improving recycling.

Question No. 377 answered with Question No. 364.

Brexit Negotiations

378. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has met with representatives of shipping lines in the context of Brexit; the potential for disruption of goods transport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33293/17]

392. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has undertaken a study of the need for additional roll-on, roll-off ferry services in the context of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33295/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 378 and 392 together.

As part of my Department's preparation for Brexit, there has been wide engagement with sectoral stakeholders, including the shipping sector, at the All Ireland Transport Sectoral Meeting held on 23 January and at a specific workshop hosted by my officials in April on the possible impacts of Brexit on maritime transport.

I am aware that a significant proportion of goods destined for EU markets use the UK land-bridge to access these markets. The efficiency of these routes could be affected by Brexit, particularly if there were increased border and custom procedures and delays, or if the UK applied differing standards, road charging or regulatory regimes. The impact of Brexit on shipping will be dependent upon the outcome of EU-UK negotiations.

My Department, in liaison with the Irish Maritime Development Office, is commencing research into the use of the UK land-bridge by Irish importers and exporters. The purpose of the research is to establish the volume of traffic using the UK land-bridge, the likely consequences that Brexit will have on land-bridge usage, and the various options that may be available.

All shipping companies servicing routes to and from Ireland operate as independent commercial companies. Shipping services are market driven. In the past, ferry operators have responded to economic developments and increased or reduced capacity in response to market demands. I expect ferry services to adapt to changing market demands and conditions following Britain's exit from the EU but I will continue to monitor the situation.

Brexit Issues

379. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has investigated the impact of Brexit on the use of the United Kingdom as a land-bridge for goods to other markets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33294/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department in liaison with the Irish Maritime Development Office is commencing a study/research into the use of the UK Land-bridge by Irish importers and exporters. The purpose of the research is to establish the nature and scale of traffic using the UK Land-bridge currently, the potential consequences that Brexit will have on future land-bridge usage and the various alternative options that may be viable. I expect the Study to commence shortly.

Road Projects Status

380. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when funding will be made available for the construction of the western distributor road which is needed to provide essential high quality access to a site (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33136/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads (such as the Western Distributor Road) is the statutory responsibility of the relevant local authority (in this case Sligo County Council), in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the local authority's own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

Decisions on the transport elements of the Capital Plan 2016-2021 were framed by the conclusions reached in my Department's Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport.

Based on the findings in that report it is envisaged that maintenance and renewal of the road network will continue to be the main priority over the next period and the bulk of the roads capital budget, approximately €4.4 billion, is earmarked for such essential work with a further €600 million allocated for implementation of the PPP road programme which is already underway. In this context it was not possible to include a range of projects (including the Western Distributor Road) in the Plan given the overall funding envelope available.

As regards the possibility of additional funding within the Plan period, the Capital Plan Review process is underway. My Department is making a strong case for additional funding, including the development of a project pipeline for road schemes. The final decisions on allocations are, however, matters for the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and Government as a whole.

Notwithstanding the above, my Department has been facilitating the development of the project for a number of years and has provided an allocation of €100k to Sligo County Council in 2017 to progress the detailed design of the project.

Air Services Provision

381. **Deputy Maria Bailey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he will take to alleviate the inconvenience and sleep disturbance being caused by the use of south Dublin as the flight path for flights to Dublin Airport from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33182/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue of the direction or re-direction of flight paths for Dublin Airport is an operational matter for the Irish Aviation Authority, so I shall immediately refer the Deputy's question to the authority for direct reply.

However, please advise my private office if a response is not received within ten working days.

Foreshore Licence Applications

382. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the details of the research and investigations undertaken which led to the observation submitted by the Coast Guard in its role as a named external consultee advising the Minister for Housing, Planning Community and Local Government in relation to the foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway Bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33191/17]

383. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has satisfied himself regarding the submitted observation in respect of the foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway Bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33192/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 382 and 383 together.

The Department of Housing, Planning Community and Local Government sought the Irish Coast Guard's views on the Application by the Marine Institute in respect of prototype wind, wave and tidal energy devices at the Galway Bay Marine and Renewable Energy Test Site Spiddal, Co Galway on 10 March 2016. It was conveyed in my Department's response on

22 March 2016 that the Coast Guard had no objection or comments to make in relation to the project at this juncture, but would retain its view to make some operational points closer to the completion date on matters such as Navigational Warnings, oil spillage etc.

Foreshore Licence Applications

384. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the details of the research and investigations undertaken which led to the observation submitted by the Commissioners of Irish Lights in its role as a named external consultee advising the Minister for Housing, Planning Community and Local Government on the foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway Bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33193/17]

385. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has satisfied himself regarding the submitted observation in respect of the foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway Bay in view of the fact that the Commissioners of Irish Lights held that as the site is within the current wave energy test site, Irish lights have no objections to the proposed developments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33194/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 384 and 385 together.

The matter raised is the responsibility of the Commissioners of Irish Lights, and I have no role in the matter.

Rail Services Provision

386. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the planned automation of Greystones DART station; the impact on staff and passengers, including those with disabilities and tourists that often look to staff for help and information; the health and safety implications; his plans to lease Greystones station for commercial use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33198/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the Company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Disability Services Provision

387. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to make public transport more accessible for wheelchair users; the extent of the public transport network which is wheelchair accessible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33226/17]

388. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the initiatives in place to encourage transport providers to make their services as accessible as possible to wheelchair users; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33227/17]

389. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he is taking to alleviate the fact that persons with mobility and sensory impairments must give at least 24 hours notice before journeying with railway transport services; the further steps he is taking to reduce this notice time; and the way in which the target time may be reduced or indeed be replaced by fully accessible carriages. [33228/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 387 to 389, inclusive, together.

Accessibility features are built into all new public transport infrastructure projects and vehicles from the design stage and new systems such as the Luas are fully accessible. In addition, 100% of the Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann city fleets are wheelchair accessible, as well as approximately 80% of the Bus Éireann coach fleet.

With regard to existing infrastructure, there is an ongoing Accessibility Grants Programme to upgrade public transport infrastructure and facilities to help improve transport accessibility across the country. The programme is managed by the National Transport Authority (NTA) on behalf of my Department.

Funding is being provided to the NTA in 2017 for accessibility upgrade works at a number of rail stations; for accessible bus stops and bus stations; and for a Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Grant Scheme. Funding is also provided via the NTA for the Travel Assistance Scheme which is run by Dublin Bus. Under the scheme an assistant can accompany people who need help using public transport and to plan a journey on Dublin Bus, Luas and the DART.

The issue of staffing levels at train stations is an operational matter for Iarnród Éireann. I understand that Iarnród Éireann plans to confirm new pilot arrangements for mobility-impaired customers shortly, which will dramatically reduce the current advance notification period and ensure a better response when customers requiring assistance cannot give notice.

In light of both the NTA's and Iarnród Éireann's responsibilities in this area, I have forwarded the Deputy's questions to both organisations for direct reply on the issues raised. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Projects Expenditure

390. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated amount he expects to spend on improving and building local, regional and national roads in each of the years 2017 to 2021 including the already stated Department commitments with regard to the State capital roads investment programme together with all levels of road improvements at a national and county council level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33231/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The 7 year transport element of the Capital Plan published in September 2015 sets out transport investment priorities to 2022. Decisions on the transport elements of the Capital Plan in the period to 2022 were framed by the conclusions reached in my Department's Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (SFILT). The SFILT report highlighted the importance of maintenance and renewal of transport infrastructure together with some targeted investments to improve the existing network.

The Capital Plan includes provision for expenditure of €6 billion on the road network. €4.4bn of this funding is earmarked for essential maintenance and strengthening works on the

network. Given the annual funding profile, maintenance and strengthening is the main focus of expenditure in the early years of the Plan. This category of expenditure, which includes roads pavement resurfacing and renewal, is essential to protect the country's road assets. A further €600m in the Capital Plan relates to PPP projects and €860m is targeted at progressing a limited number of road improvement projects, including the regional and local road schemes mentioned in the Plan. Of course, regional and local roads (including expenditure thereon) are the responsibility of local road authorities, who can also invest in their roads from their own resources.

While the Capital Plan reflects the overall funding envelope available in the period to 2022, the Deputy will be aware that the Government is undertaking a Review of the Capital Plan at present. The purpose of the Review is to take stock of progress and provide the Government with an opportunity to consider the scope for increased levels of investment, including in the transport sector, taking economic growth and fiscal progress into account. The final decisions on the Capital Plan Review allocations are, however, matters for the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and Government as a whole.

Grant allocations for 2017 are set out in the Regional and Local Road Grant Allocation booklet which is available in the Dáil library. Allocations for future years will be decided as part of the annual Estimates process.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

391. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will award a sports capital grant to a club (details supplied). [33284/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on the 24th February and I can confirm that an application has been submitted by the organisation referred to by the Deputy.

By the closing date, a record number of 2,320 applications seeking €155 million in grants were received and all of these applications are currently being assessed. The total amount available to allocate under this round is €30 million. Accordingly, the allocation of grants will be particularly challenging. Given the number of applications received and the detailed information submitted, it will take a further number of weeks to complete this process and I expect that an announcement regarding allocations will be made in September.

Question No. 392 answered with Question No. 378.

Ports Development

393. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has conducted a review of the additional infrastructure which may be required at or in the vicinity of ports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33304/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The core objective of National Ports Policy is to facilitate a competitive and effective market for maritime transport services. Ports operate as independent commercial companies.

A number of Ports have embarked upon a period of significant phased infrastructure investment in relation to key elements of their Masterplans. The successful progression of these

development plans will prepare the ports for increases in ship sizes and the changing trading and operational preferences of the providers of shipping services. These plans will provide the flexibility to cater for increases in ship numbers and enhance port capacity in Ireland. All of these developments are financed by the port companies without recourse to the Exchequer.

The impact of Brexit on shipping is unknown and will be dependent upon the outcome of EU-UK negotiations. Ports are aware of the possible negative implications Brexit may have on the movement of goods and are working with relevant agencies to try and avoid undue delays. In line with normal business planning, ports review their infrastructural requirements on a regular basis.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

394. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will award a sports capital grant to a club (details supplied). [33311/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on the 24th February and I can confirm that an application has been submitted by the organisation referred to by the Deputy.

By the closing date, a record number of 2,320 applications seeking €155 million in grants were received and all of these applications are currently being assessed. The total amount available to allocate under this round is €30 million. Accordingly, the allocation of grants will be particularly challenging. Given the number of applications received and the detailed information submitted, it will take a further number of weeks to complete this process and I expect that an announcement regarding allocations will be made in September.

Brexit Documents

395. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33347/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Following on from publication of the document setting out the Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations, work is underway across Departments to prepare adaptive Sectoral Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders, and will encompass the following themes:

- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;
- Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;
- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;
- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;

- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy. The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport is feeding its sectoral issues into this process and is engaging with sectorial stakeholders as part of this process.

Aviation Industry

396. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has made inquiries or received assurances from the European Commission that to appoint the IAA as the competent authority under EU Regulation 598/14 would not represent a conflict of interest; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33422/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Member States, under Regulation 598/2014, are free to establish appropriate domestic mechanisms and arrangements to ensure that the objectives of the Regulation are met. Article 3 of Regulation 598/2014 prescribes that Member States shall designate one or more Competent Authority responsible for the process to be followed when adopting operating restrictions. This article further states that the Competent Authority shall be independent of any organisation which could be affected by noise-related action adding that this independence may be achieved through functional separation.

The Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) already has well-established functional separation of its safety regulation function and air navigation service provision function. It is envisaged that a separate unit for noise management will be established within the Safety Regulation Division in a manner that ensures that the requirements of the Regulation are complied with. In accordance with Article 3(3) of the Regulation, as soon as the formal designation process is complete, the European Commission will be notified.

Railway Stations

397. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will designate Enfield train station in County Meath as a short hopper station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33425/17]

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.

Motor Insurance

398. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress he and his Department have made regarding the establishment of a properly functioning motor insurance database with the insurance industry in order to show the insured status of persons; the way in which and when this database will be made available to An Garda Síochána; when he expects this action to contribute to reducing motor insurance premiums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33455/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The establishment of an Insured and Uninsured database is well underway. The Motor Insurers' Bureau of Ire-

land (MIBI) will have ownership of and responsibility for the database, which will be made available to my Department and An Garda Síochána. It will be piloted by An Garda Síochána from September 2017 and it is anticipated that it will be fully operational by the end of 2018.

Once the database enters the testing phase and has produced reliable and robust data, it will be a matter for the IT teams in my Department, the MIBI and An Garda Síochána to design an appropriate interface for the exchange of the relevant information required by both parties.

This action will not alone contribute to the reduction in motor insurance premiums, but is one of a number of measures undertaken by the Cost of Insurance Working Group, in which this Department plays an active role, and for which the Minister for Finance is primarily responsible. The second quarterly update of that group is due to be published in the coming days by the Department of Finance. Other actions include the establishment of a fully functioning integrated insurance fraud database for industry to detect patterns of fraud and to establish a personal injuries commission to benchmark international personal injury awards with those in Ireland. These actions are all ongoing and I am confident that we will see a decrease in the cost of motor insurance as they are implemented.

Road Safety

399. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Garda Traffic Corps has reduced in numbers from 795 assigned gardaí in March 2014 to 655 gardaí in March 2017; his views on same; if he has satisfied himself with these figures in relation to road safety; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33456/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I meet with my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality, along with the other major stakeholders in the area of road safety including An Garda Síochána, the Road Safety Authority, Transport Ireland Infrastructure, the Attorney General, the Health and Safety Association and the City and County Managers Association, at the Ministerial Committee on Road Safety, where we come together quarterly to explore ways to make our roads safer for all users.

I have been made aware of the reduction in numbers of the Garda Traffic Corps in recent years as this country dealt with a severe recession. Indeed staffing levels dropped in all areas of public service over the same time period.

However, in January 2017 I received an assurance by An Garda Síochána that there will be an increase in the Traffic Corps of 10% during 2017, resulting in greater enforcement of traffic law, and that road safety enforcement is a priority in the Garda Policing Plan for 2017. In addition, I am informed that newly probationed gardaí now spend 10 weeks with the Traffic Corps to gain experience.

The welcome drop in road fatalities this year to date I believe can be attributed to this and other measures implemented by my Department and our partners in road safety.

Swimming Pool Programme Status

400. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the Lucan swimming pool project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33458/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Bren-

dan Griffin): In January of 2016, my Department contacted local authorities and sought expressions of interest in a limited round of swimming pool allocations under the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (LASPP). There were three expressions of interest received for new pools, two of which were valid and both in Dublin. Having assessed existing commitments and the funding available, it was decided to include the proposal from South Dublin County Council (SDCC) for a new swimming pool in Lucan in the LASPP.

My Department wrote to SDCC in April 2016 advising the Council to undertake the Preliminary Report stage (which includes the Feasibility Study, Appointment of Consultants for Preliminary Proposals and Design Brief). Documentation in this regard was received from SDCC in July 2016. Following examination by my Department's technical advisor and my officials, SDCC was given approval in October 2016 to appoint the recommended design team and proceed to the design brief. In April of this year, the detailed drawings were received by my Department and referred to my Department's technical advisor for consideration. Following clarification of some technical queries, my Department issued approval to the technical design element of the Preliminary Report on the 5th July. This approval allows the Council to have the detailed contract documents prepared and therefore has allowed SDCC to proceed to the Part 8 planning process. My Department is continuing to liaise with SDCC in relation to some other outstanding documentation.

Road Tolls

401. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for a discount on the toll for multiple or frequent commuter toll use on the M3; and if motorway tolls can be incorporated into the Leap card system. [33533/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy in relation to roads. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects on national roads are a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the relevant local authority.

More specifically, the statutory powers to levy tolls on national roads, to make toll bye-laws and to enter into toll agreements with private investors are vested in TII under Part V of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended by the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Roads Act 2007).

Noting the above position, I have referred the matter to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Community Childcare Subvention Programme

402. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to have a community child care service reopened (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33167/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Since early 2015, my Department has supported intensive engagement with Pobal and Longford County Childcare Committee to maintain childcare provision in the service in question. Unfortunately, following an EGM of the board in March 2016, my Department was informed of the intention to proceed with an orderly wind-down of the service. Following this closure I delegated Pobal,

as agents of my Department, along with Longford County Childcare Committee, to work with local bodies in relation to McEoin Park and the re-establishment of a service for the local community. Proposals were requested from a number of existing community based services in May 2016 and none were forthcoming at that time. As the Deputy will be aware, my Department does not directly provide childcare- rather we work with individuals, companies and community/not-for-profit groups to fund childcare provision. Pobal and Longford CCC have had discussions with a number of groups regarding the re-opening of a childcare facility, and are still pursuing options locally in this regard. Longford County Council have also been proactive in making a suitable premises available, and in the refurbishment and maintenance of same.

Unfortunately, to date we have not yet been able to secure a partner to operate this service. Pobal and Longford CCC are still pursuing options locally in this regard, and I am open to receiving proposals from local/community groups who may be in a position to assist. I understand that officials in my Department have been in direct contact with the Deputy about this, and I have asked them to continue to keep you up to date on this matter.

Child and Family Agency

403. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason a social welfare worker that has been assigned to a case involving child welfare has not made contact with the family despite being assigned the case on 12 May 2016. [33199/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Unfortunately I cannot provide any information in relation to this case as assignment of social workers is a matter for Tusla. The Deputy has provided insufficient details to allow me to refer the query to the Child and Family Agency.

Child Care Services Expenditure

404. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the details of the €132 million to be spent on measures for child care in the zero to six months, six months to three years of age, and after school care categories respectively, in tabular form; and when these payments will commence. [33236/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I would note to the Deputy that these schemes are entirely demand led, any figures can only be estimated. The costs estimated by my Department in determining these figures have been based on the individual schemes which do not match with age cohorts described by the Deputy.

I understand that the Deputy is referencing the ACS figures provided in a separate PQ estimating that the full cost would be €150m with €132m for the targeted element. It is important to differentiate between the ACS and the more affordable childcare provisions being put in place from September. Notwithstanding this, I have put in place these measures to go some way to addressing the needs of childcare providers, parents and children pending the introduction of the ACS.

The cost of the enhancements to the existing provision will be met from within the allocation originally identified for ACS of €150m. These will include

- A new universal subsidy which will be available for all children aged between 6 months and 3 years of age (or until they are eligible for ECCE) in registered childcare. This will amount

to as much as €80 a month or €1,040 per year for children in full time childcare.

- Subsidies provided under existing childcare schemes, specifically the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) and Training and Employment Childcare (TEC) Schemes will be increased significantly, in some cases by as much as 50%. These schemes will benefit children from 0 months up to 15 years old.

The new rates and the universal subsidy will take effect from September 2017.

Child Care Costs

405. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children estimated to receive a subsidy for each of the amounts (details supplied) per hour, per week under the 2017 extended childcare scheme measures; and the cost associated with each of these separate categories of children once implemented. [33237/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): On 11th April, I made an announcement that this September a range of measures will be introduced by my Department to make childcare more affordable for thousands of families throughout Ireland. These include:

- A new universal subsidy will be available for all children aged between 6 months and 3 years of age (or until they are eligible for ECCE) in registered childcare. This will amount to as much as €80 a month or €1,040 per year for children in full time childcare.

- Subsidies provided under existing childcare schemes, specifically the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) and Training and Employment Childcare (TEC) Schemes will be increased significantly, in some cases by as much as 50%.

As the childcare grant schemes as currently constituted are not calculated on a per-hour basis, it is not possible to provide the breakdown requested by the Deputy. However, I have provided an estimated number of beneficiaries by scheme as per the table below for the 17/18 programme year:

Scheme	Expected number of beneficiaries
Targeted CCS bands (current)	25,000
Targeted CCS bands (additional)	5,000
TEC (current)	7,000
Universal CCS	33,000
TOTAL	70,000

The cost of these provisions will be within the envelope previously allocated to the Affordable Childcare Scheme, a figure of €150m for 2018.

I would note that as these programmes are demand led and any figures can only be estimates. My Department has been running a multi-faceted information campaign to raise awareness amongst childcare providers, parents and the wider sector with regard to the availability of increased childcare subvention taking effect from September 2017. A campaign which I would hope will maximise the numbers taking up the schemes.

Child Care Qualifications

406. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to re-examine the 2016 child care regulation requirements whereby only staff that are fully qualified with a major level 5 in early childhood care and education can be included in adult to child ratios. [33287/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The majority of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 came into effect on 30th June 2016.

The Regulations provide that each employee working directly with children attending the service must hold at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. The Regulations clearly state that the service provider must ensure that their staff meet this standard.

This section of the regulations took effect on 30th June 2016 for services registering after that date and for all other services on 31st December 2016.

The 2017 European Semester: Country Specific Recommendations for Ireland, which were published on 22 May 2017, that 'Ireland should enhance social infrastructure....including quality childcare'. The minimum qualification requirement contained in the Regulations has an important role to play with regard to ensuring the provision of quality childcare by centre based childcare providers. Consequently, I have no plans to amend the Regulations.

Brexit Documents

407. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33334/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Following on from publication of the document setting out the Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations, work is underway across departments to prepare adaptive Sectoral Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders, and will encompass the following themes:

- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;

- Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;

- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;

- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;

- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

All of this work is ongoing and must also respond to the emerging developments in the Brexit negotiations. There is no decision as yet on publication dates.

In January of this year, I hosted a sectoral dialogue with children, young people and key stakeholders in Croke Park at which the views of all interested parties were captured. Since then, the Advisory Council to Better Outcomes Brighter Futures; the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 - 2020 has considered the report of the event and work is ongoing in relation to the more detailed implications of Brexit. Furthermore, matters in relation to Brexit were discussed by over 100 children and young people in April of this year as part of the annual regional Comhairle na nÓg Networking events. This has enabled my Department to table those issues which may impact on children and young people, post-Brexit, and indeed identify those issues which resonate most strongly with our youngest citizens.

However, it must be stated that such matters are subsets of much larger items which will be considered, in the main, in conjunction with colleagues in the Departments of Finance, Justice and Equality, Education and Health as part of the wider negotiating process. Accordingly, given the limited impact of Brexit on my Department, there is not the requirement to resource a dedicated Brexit Unit nor the necessity to develop particular sectoral responses to Brexit. However, while this is the case, my Department continues to engage with all relevant structures and communication channels – coordinated by the Department of An Taoiseach.

Youth Services Funding

408. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the capital funding allocated to the youth work sector in 2016 and 2017; the amount of funding that has been drawn down by beneficiaries to date in both 2016 and 2017, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33510/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. The funding schemes support national and local youth work involving approximately 1,400 youth work staff working in youth services and communities throughout the country.

Budget 2017 provided an additional €5.5m in current funding to my Department to support the provision of these youth services. The total current funding for 2017 is €57.4m.

In recent years, capital funding has been made available to my Department to purchase equipment and to support small scale projects, including refurbishment, health and safety fit-outs and accessibility improvements in local voluntary youth services.

A capital allocation of up to €2.6m was made available to my Department in 2016 for capital projects in the voluntary youth services in 2016/2017.

Year	amount of funding drawn down from 2016/17 Capital allocation
2016	€1,243,452
2017*	€640,381

* Grants amounting to just over €200,000 remain to be drawn down in 2017.

Budget 2017 made available a total of €2.6m to my Department to help meet the capital needs of youth services and projects across the country. To facilitate the effective allocation of this funding my Department has formed a working group including Youth Officers from Education and Training Boards from around the country to develop proposals for the disbursement of the 2017 capital funding allocation and I hope to be in a position to announce details of this in the

coming months.

Disability Allowance Appeals

409. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an appeal for disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33125/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 18th April 2017. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

410. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an application for disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); when a decision can be expected to be reached in view of the fact that the person has no income in the interim; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33169/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I confirm that my Department received an application for disability allowance from this lady on 15 June 2017. 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.

The person in question is currently in receipt of supplementary welfare allowance from this Department.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Family Income Supplement Data

411. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of the family income supplement in the months of May 2017 and June 2017; and the estimated spend on FIS in 2017. [33172/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The number of customers in receipt of Family Income Supplement (FIS) at the May and June 2017 is as follows:

May 2017	June 2017
57,025	57,050

The estimated expenditure on FIS for 2017 is €422.5 million.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

Domiciliary Care Allowance

412. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the average processing time for domiciliary care allowance applications; the reason for these delays; her plans to address the issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33218/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Department is currently experiencing delays in the processing of Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) claims. We are extremely sorry for any worry or concern this may cause to parents/guardians of children with additional care needs. Processing times for DCA are currently not meeting the target of having 70% of applications processed within 15 weeks. At present it is taking up to 20 weeks on average to finalise an application. Applications are processed in date of receipt order. There are a number of factors that have contributed to the extended time required to process claims.

First, there is a significant increase in the volume of applications being received. The numbers applying for DCA have increased significantly since 2009, when the Department took over administration of the scheme from the HSE. The year on year increase in volumes over recent years has consistently been in the 15-20% range due to an increase in population and more awareness of the scheme. Over 1,000 claims were received in May, along with a further 700 in June; whereas the average would have been 400 per month a few years ago.

Second, following a High Court ruling in 2016, there is now a need for the Department's medical assessors to provide the deciding officer with a more detailed opinion on the child's eligibility for the scheme and for the deciding officer in turn to provide more detailed reasons for their decision when communicating this to the customer. These factors have resulted in the time taken to finalise applications increasing significantly and as a result the numbers that can be processed have reduced and the timescale to finalise each application has increased.

In response to the current situation, additional deciding officers have been assigned to the scheme in recent weeks, this extra processing capacity will allow for an improvement in processing times over the coming weeks and months. The position will continue to be monitored closely.

Disability Allowance Payments

413. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Social Protection the steps she will take to ensure that persons (details supplied) can have financial support while awaiting the outcome of the application process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33229/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This man has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 5 July 2017. The first payment will be made by his chosen payment method on 12 July 2017.

Arrears of payment will issue by cheque in the next few days.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pensions

414. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of the State pension (contributory) and the State pension (non-contributory) with a gender breakdown for each; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33234/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Number of Recipients of State Pension Contributory and Non-Contributory at end of June 2017 are represented in the following tabular statement:

Scheme	Male	Female
State Pension Contributory	244,493	142,432
State Pension Non-Contributory	36,529	58,215

National Carers' Strategy

415. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the community supports for persons caring for persons with dementia here; her plans to expand the support levels for those persons caring for persons with dementia; her plans to meet dementia advocacy groups to discuss increases in funding in the context of budget 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33245/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Government acknowledges the crucial role that family carers play and is fully committed to supporting carers in that role. This commitment is recognised in both the Programme for a Partnership Government and the National Carers' Strategy.

My Department provides a range of schemes and payments that support those who are caring in their communities for family members, friends or neighbours, who as a result of an illness or disability require full-time care and attention.

The income supports for people who are providing full-time care are; carer's benefit, carer's allowance (including half-rate carer's allowance), domiciliary care allowance and the annual carer's support grant.

Budget 2017 changes include a €5 increase in the payment rate and a measure that extends the payment of carer's allowance to 12 weeks following the permanent admission of the care recipient to a nursing home and the end of the full-time caring role. This builds on Budget 2016 improvements including extending the period when carers allowance can be paid following the death of a care recipient from 6 to 12 weeks and increasing the carer's support grant to €1,700.

My Department hosts an annual pre- budget forum, due to take place on Friday 21st of July, which provides an opportunity for sectoral groups to provide submissions on their Budget priorities. As Minister, I also remain available to requests to meet advocacy groups to discuss issues relevant to the policies and responsibilities of my Department.

While there are no current plans to develop specific supports for dementia outside of the carer supports I have mentioned here, I can assure the Deputy that I will continue to keep the range of supports available to carers and people with disabilities under review. Any additional

improvements or additions to these supports would have to be considered in a budgetary context.

The deputy may be aware of the HSE plan for Dementia, Understand Together www.understandtogether.ie.

I hope this clarifies the issue for the deputy.

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme Eligibility

416. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason it is necessary for claimants of the back to school clothing and footwear allowance to be in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment in order to be eligible for this benefit; her views on whether she considers this unfair to other claimants not in receipt of such payments but that are on low incomes and that would qualify under the means test; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33248/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The back to school clothing and footwear allowance (BSCFA) scheme provides a once-off payment to eligible families to assist with the costs of clothing and footwear when children start or return to school each autumn. The allowance is not intended to meet the full cost of school clothing and footwear but to provide assistance to parents towards these costs. The Government has provided €47.4 million for the scheme in 2017 which will operate from June to September. In order to qualify for the allowance claimants must be in receipt of a qualifying payment. There is a broad range of qualifying payments which includes:

- Weekly social welfare payments,
- Approved employment schemes,
- Recognised education or training courses such as Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) or Back To Education Allowance;
- Further Education and Training Courses (formerly Fás), Fáilte Ireland or LES training scheme

In-work income supports for low-income working families, including family income supplement and the back to work family dividend are qualifying payments for BSCFA and income under these schemes is not included in the means assessment for BSCFA.

Further information on the BSCFA scheme, including details of qualifying payments, household income limits and a frequently asked questions section are provided on the Departments website: www.welfare.ie/backtoschool.

The Deputy may be aware that my colleague, the Minister for Education and Skills, has recently published a new circular on the measures to be adopted by schools to reduce the cost of school uniforms and other costs, as part of a range of measures to take greater account of the needs of parents and students in the school system.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

One-Parent Family Payment Eligibility

417. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will remove the means test on income generated through the rent a room scheme for those in receipt of one parent family payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33288/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Social welfare legislation provides that, for means testing purposes, rental income received by a claimant and his or her spouse/partner where it derived from a property other than the family home is not assessed. However, the yearly value of such a second property is assessed on a notional basis based on the market value of the property less any outstanding mortgage. This reflects the position that the individual possesses a capital asset which can be realised to provide income support.

Where an individual is renting part of their family home, the cash value of the rental income is assessed. Such rental income is reduced by a range of deductions. These include:

- i. a proportion of any mortgage interest paid by the claimant on the part of the property rented,
- ii. a 15% deduction for voids (i.e. periods when the accommodation is vacant between lettings), and,
- iii. if the rooms let are furnished, a 5% deduction for wear and tear..

These arrangements are outlined on the Department's website at the following link: www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Means-Assessment.aspx.

In addition, a special provision exists for claimants of the State Pension (Non-Contributory) and Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's (Non-Contributory) Pension, whereby no assessment is made of any money received in respect of rent from a person who lives with the pensioner where, but for that person, the pensioner would be living alone.

Fully disregarding all rental income would run contrary to the policy of ensuring that social welfare expenditure is targeted to those who need it the most. It could also potentially negatively impact on the incentive to work for working age recipients. Any change to my Department's means policies would have to be considered in the overall policy and budgetary context.

Brexit Issues

418. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Social Protection to provide an update on the work conducted by her Department to identify the potential impacts of Brexit on those in receipt of social welfare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33302/17]

419. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33345/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 418 and 419 together.

Following on from publication of the document setting out the Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations, work is underway across departments to prepare adaptive Sectoral Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectoral challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders, and will encompass the following themes:

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- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;
- Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;
- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;
- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;
- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

All of this work is ongoing and must also respond to the emerging developments in the Brexit negotiations. There is no decision as yet on publication dates.

The Department is continuing with its assessment of the implications for relevant social security schemes and services including pensions, Child Benefit and services between Ireland and the UK, including Northern Ireland. This is part of the ongoing Brexit analysis for input into the Government's wider deliberative process. Clearly, however, this analysis will have to be informed by the UK's intentions in this area.

It is very important to emphasise that the current arrangements for social security between Ireland and the UK, and the UK and EU27, have not changed. All social welfare payments continue to be paid as normal.

I can strongly reiterate that this Government's long-term objective is to ensure that the reciprocity of civil rights and social welfare rights and entitlements which currently exist for Irish and UK citizens moving within Ireland, and between Ireland and Britain, under the Common Travel Area are preserved and maintained

Invalidity Pension Payments

420. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an application for invalidity pension in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33371/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The gentleman referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from the 6 October 2016. His first payment issued to his nominated post office on the 25 May 2017 and all arrears due issued to him by cheque on 6 July 2017. The gentleman in question was notified of this decision on the 10 May 2017.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Applications

421. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's benefit by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33387/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's benefit (CARB) from the person concerned on 24 May 2017. The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

422. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33388/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 4 November 2016.

The application was disallowed on the grounds that she was not providing full-time care and attention as required. The application was also disallowed on the grounds that she failed to disclose requested information to an officer of my department and therefore it could not be established that her means were less than the statutory limit.

The person concerned was notified on 25 May 2017 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The Department received notice from Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) on 10 July 2017 that the person concerned had appealed the decision. A submission in support of the decision is being prepared and will shortly be forwarded along with the file to the SWAO for determination.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

423. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33389/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance from the person concerned on 22 May 2017. The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Payments

424. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33390/17]

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Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance was awarded to the person concerned from 5 May 2016. The first payment is expected to issue to their nominated bank account on 20 July 2017.

Arrears of allowance due from 5 May 2016 to 19 July 2017 will also issue on that date. The person concerned was notified on 11 July 2017.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Eligibility

425. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the redress awarded to a person from the Residential Institutions Redress Board should be included in a means assessment for a supplementary welfare payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33400/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme provides assistance to eligible people in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs and those of their dependants. The main purpose of the scheme is to provide immediate and flexible assistance for those in need who do not qualify for payment under other State schemes.

Social welfare legislation provides for the disregard of certain compensation awards, including awards by the Residential Institutions Redress Board when assessing the means of a person for social assistance schemes including supplementary welfare allowance.

If the Deputy has concerns in respect of a particular case he should bring the details to the attention of the Department.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

426. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33401/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 20th March 2017. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Social Protection. These papers have been received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 19th June 2017 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

427. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a disability allowance appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33408/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 4th July 2017, 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.

Disability Allowance Payments

428. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33409/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Based on the information provided to the department, this gentleman was awarded disability allowance (DA) at €209.50 per week. This consists of €178 basic rate, €9 living alone allowance and €22.50 fuel allowance (payable during the fuel season). The basic rate is a reduced rate as the person in question is also in receipt of a private pension. The income from this pension is €16.83 per week. The department rounds this figure down to €15. This amount is then deducted from the maximum rate of DA of €193.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pensions Payments

429. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated cost of restoring the State pension transition over two years. [33413/17]

430. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated cost of restoring the State pension transition over three years. [33414/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 429 and 430 together.

The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 provided that State pension age will be increased gradually to 68 years. This began in January 2014 with the abolition of the State pension (transition), which had been available from 65 for those who satisfied the qualifying conditions, thereby standardising State pension age for all at 66 years. This is the current State pension age. It will increase to 67 in 2021 and to 68 in 2028.

Reversing the abolition of State pension (transition) would have a significant Exchequer cost. In 2013, the cost of the State pension (transition) was €137 million. Its abolition was not

expected to save that amount of expenditure in full, as some people who were affected would alternatively claim working age payments such as Jobseeker's Benefit (albeit at a lower rate than the rate of the State pension), or may claim an Increase for a Qualified Adult in respect of their spouse's pension. However, it is estimated that well over half of the gross cost has been saved each year as a result of this measure, and this would be expected to increase as (a) the number of 65 year olds increases, (b) the change results in a higher percentage of people working while aged 65, and (c) there have been two Budget increases in the rate of the State pension since then. It is estimated that the net saving in 2018 is likely to be in the region of €84 million, and this is expected to rise to €87 million by 2020. These figures do not include future rate increases.

The cost of reversing this decision would depend, on the effective date of such a measure, and also on any resultant changes in behaviour. If it were to be introduced over a phased basis, it would depend upon how this was effected, but it might be expected that if there was some means used to achieve this over 2 years, the cost might be 50% of the annual cost in year one and 100% in year two, whereas if it was phased in over 3 years, the cost might be 33.3% of the annual cost in year one, 66.7% in year two, and 100% in year three. More detailed proposals would be required to examine the likely cost of such a proposal in greater detail.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

431. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing jobseeker's allowance, supplementary welfare allowance and the back to education allowance by €5. [33415/17]

432. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing age reduced jobseeker's payments in line with the jobseeker's payments paid to those aged over 26 years of age over three years. [33416/17]

453. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated cost of each €1 increase to the age reduced JSA and SWA weekly rate of €102.70 in 2018. [33550/17]

454. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated cost of each €1 increase to the age reduced JSA and SWA weekly rate of €147.80 in 2018. [33551/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 431, 432, 453 and 454 together.

The full year cost of increasing jobseeker's allowance, supplementary welfare allowance and the back to education allowance by €5 per week is estimated to be €64.8 million in 2018.

The full year cost of increasing the age related reduced jobseeker's rates of €102.70 per week and €147.80 per week to the maximum jobseeker's rate of €193 per week is estimated to be €109.1 million in 2018. The cost of one third of this increase (if spread out over three years) is €36.4 million in 2018.

The full year cost of a €1 increase in the weekly rates of jobseeker's allowance and supplementary welfare allowance paid to those who are under 25 years of age is estimated to be €1.1 million in 2018.

The full year cost of a €1 increase in the weekly rates of jobseeker's allowance and supple-

mentary welfare allowance paid to those who are aged 25 years of age is estimated to be €0.2 million in 2018.

The costings listed above include proportionate increases for qualified adults and for those on reduced rates of payment, where relevant. It should also be noted that these costings are subject to change over the coming months in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2018.

Carer's Allowance Applications

433. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will be made on a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33426/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I confirm that my Department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 30 March 2017.

The application was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 23 June 2017 to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied. Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

434. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a person's (details supplied) application for carer's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33427/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance was awarded to the person concerned from 11 May 2017. The first payment is expected to issue to their nominated bank account on 13 July 2017.

Arrears of allowance due from 11 May 2017 to 12 July 2017, inclusive of the 2017 carer support grant, should also issue to her nominated bank account on 13 July 2017. She was notified in writing on 7 July 2017.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Applications

435. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a person's (details supplied) application for carer's benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33428/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for carer's benefit (CARB) was received from the person concerned on 23 June 2017.

The application is currently being examined by a deciding officer and once processed, the

person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Payments Administration

436. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent to which she has identified the hardship caused in circumstances in which various payments are cut off, in some cases leading to homelessness; her plans to amend the system to avoid further homelessness; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33498/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Rent supplement plays a vital role in housing families and individuals, with the scheme supporting some 41,200 recipients for which the Government has provided €253 million for in 2017.

Continued entitlement to rent supplement is not linked to entitlement to other social welfare schemes, however the rent supplement claim may be reviewed following a decision to suspend or disallow a primary social welfare payment as there may be a change to the claimant's circumstances that could affect eligibility. During a review of a rent supplement claim, the Community Welfare Service (CWS) officer will engage with the claimant to establish continued eligibility as quickly as possible and limit any delay to payments. Any person in this situation is encouraged to contact the Department's CWS office responsible for their rent supplement claim to discuss their situation, if there is a specific risk of homelessness this should be communicated to the CWS officer at the earliest opportunity.

I can assure the Deputy that every effort is made so that rent supplement tenants are supported by my Department ensuring where possible that they can remain in their homes. In view of the ongoing difficulties in the rental market, my Department provides a targeted case-by-case policy approach that allows for flexibility where landlords seek rents in excess of the rent limits, which were increased in July 2016. In addition, the Protocol arrangement in place with Threshold is operational in the areas where supply issues are particularly acute covering Kildare, Dublin, Cork, Meath, Wicklow and Galway City. Since the introduction of this flexible approach, over 11,800 tenants at imminent risk of homelessness have been supported through increased rent supplement payments.

Any persons who consider that they have an entitlement to a basic weekly SWA payment, due to their primary payment being suspended / discontinued, or an ENP to address their immediate housing commitments should contact the Community Welfare Service of the Department at their local Intreo centre.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Payments Administration

437. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will take steps to ensure that persons applying for means-tested social protection payments following family law settlement in respect of the family home are not forced to spend the entire proceeds of their settlement before being awarded rent support; and if she will make a statement on the

matter. [33499/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department operates a range of statutory means tested schemes, taking account of the income a claimant has in terms of cash, property (other than the family home) and capital. The combination of the means test and awarding differentiated rates of payment is premised on ensuring that social welfare payments are paid to those most in need and reflects the position that persons with reasonable amounts of income, capital and property are in a position to use that resource to support themselves.

The rent supplement scheme is supporting some 41,200 tenants for which the Government has provided €253 million for in 2017. The scheme is generally available to people whose means are insufficient to meet their accommodation costs and do not have alternative accommodation available. Rent supplement's means test is calculated to ensure that a person, after the payment of rent, has an income equal to the rate of supplementary welfare allowance appropriate to their family circumstances less a minimum contribution which recipients are required to pay. The standard weekly minimum contribution is €30 for a single adult household and €40 for coupled households. Many recipients pay more than this amount because recipients are required, subject to income disregards, to contribute a proportion of assessable means towards their accommodation costs. As part of this means test, a capital assessment is completed which includes savings, investments, property (other than the family home) and would include any monies realised following a settlement.

The Deputy will be aware that the strategic policy direction of the Department is to return rent supplement to its original purpose of being a short-term income support with the introduction of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, which is available nationally since 1st March 2017.

The Department has no role in financial and other settlements made between couples on separation, divorce or otherwise. Any capital owned by a person involved in such a settlement is assessed in the normal way for the purposes of means tested schemes and the appropriate disregards apply. I have no plans to change these conditions at this time.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Waiting Times

438. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent to which she can continue to improve the time taken to process appeals in respect of various social protection payments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33500/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The average appeal processing times for all appeals determined from 2014 to date in 2017 broken down by all social welfare scheme types is outlined in the tables below.

The time taken to process an appeal reflects all aspects of the appeal process including the time spent in the Department preparing the appeal submission. The quasi-judicial nature of the system impacts on appeal processing times which are proportionate to the complexity of many of the issues under appeal which often require a high level of judgement, in addition to the need to ensure due process and natural justice.

Overall appeal processing times peaked in 2011/2012 and have improved year on year since then. For example, the average time taken to determine an appeal requiring an oral hearing re-

duced from 52.5 weeks in 2011 to 28.6 weeks in 2014, 25.5 weeks in 2015, 24.1 weeks in 2016 and 25 weeks to date in 2017. The average time taken to finalise an appeal decided by way of a summary decision reduced from 25.1 weeks in 2011 to 21.1 weeks in 2014, 18.1 weeks in 2015, 17.6 weeks in 2016 and 18.5 weeks to date in 2017.

The Chief Appeals Officer has advised me that every effort will be made to continue to improve appeal processing times and that this will continue to be a priority for her office.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Appeals processing times by scheme 01/01/2014 – 31/12/14

	Average processing times (weeks)Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks)Oral Hearings
Adoptive Benefit	17.1	-
Blind Pension	20.5	24.9
Carers Allowance	30.1	34.4
Carers Benefit	22.9	23.1
Child Benefit	23.8	32.9
Disability Allowance	20.8	26.7
Illness Benefit	29.5	34.8
Domiciliary Care Allowance	22.6	29.1
Deserted Wives Benefit	-	64.7
Deserted Wives Allowance	-	41.8
Farm Assist	23.2	28.3
Bereavement Grant	25.6	31.9
Family Income Supplement	26.0	32.6
Invalidity Pension	25.9	31.2
Liabile Relatives	21.5	33.2
One Parent Family Payment	24.4	33.5
Maternity Benefit	22.4	44.7
Partial Capacity Benefit	48.5	48.5
State Pension (Contributory)	25.2	41.9
State Pension (Non-Cont)	20.3	29.4
State Pension (Transition)	27.0	35.1
Occupational Injury Benefit	33.6	33.7
Disablement Pension	23.6	30.6
Occupational Injury Benefit (Medical)	-	53.9
Incapacity Supplement	21.5	59.6
Guardian's Payment (Con)	25.9	24.9
Guardian's Payment (Non- con)	19.7	30.3
Pre Retirement Allowance	17.3	-
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	18.1	27.5
Jobseeker's Allowance	16.2	21.1
JA/JB Fraud Control	12.1	-

Questions - Written Answers

	Average processing times (weeks)Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks)Oral Hearings
Jobseeker's Benefit	16.7	21.1
Treatment Benefit	20.8	-
Respite Care Grant	24.9	27.1
Insurability of Employment	45.0	62.3
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	14.4	22.1
Survivor's Pension (Con)	20.2	32.5
Survivor's Pension (Non-Con)	24.7	24.6
Widowed Parent Grant	22.2	-
All Appeals	21.1	28.6

Appeals processing times by scheme 01/01/2015 – 31/12/2015

	Average processing times (weeks)Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks)Oral Hearings
Blind Person's Pension	21.1	30.7
Carers Allowance	20.6	25.9
Carers Benefit	19.7	21.8
Child Benefit	24.8	34.7
Disability Allowance	15.8	21.4
Illness Benefit	26.3	33.1
Partial Capacity Benefit	25.7	43.4
Domiciliary Care Allowance	21.7	28.7
Deserted Wives Benefit	19.7	26.2
Deserted Wives Allowance	-	16.2
Farm Assist	21.0	28.6
Bereavement Grant	65.7	26.0
Death Benefit (Pension)	-	22.6
Family Income Supplement	19.4	27.7
Invalidity Pension	26.2	28.4
Liabile Relatives	22.8	31.2
Maternity Benefit	22.6	17.5
One Parent Family Payment	22.9	33.9
State Pension (Contributory)	26.0	46.0
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	20.4	30.8
State Pension (Transition)	80.1	53.4
Occupational Injury Benefit	20.3	35.0
Disablement Pension	23.7	35.3
Incapacity Supplement	41.2	51.5
Guardian's Payment (Con)	18.2	27.5
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	18.7	31.0

	Average processing times (weeks)Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks)Oral Hearings
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	15.8	26.0
Jobseeker's Allowance	15.2	21.9
JA/JB Fraud Control	-	46.1
BTW Family Dividend	14.1	-
Jobseeker's Transitional	12.9	21.3
Recoverable Benefits & As- sistance	21.0	30.3
Jobseeker's Benefit	14.3	21.2
Pre-Retirement Allowance	15.0	-
Treatment Benefit	17.9	-
Carer's Support Grant *	21.2	23.6
Insurability of Employment	47.6	69.4
Supplementary Welfare Al- lowance	13.1	23.5
Survivor's Pension (Con)	24.1	46.6
Survivor's Pension (Non- con)	23.7	38.3
Widows Parent Grant	18.4	-
All Appeals	18.1	25.5

* Previously called Respite Care Grant **Appeal processing times by scheme 01/01/2016
– 31/12/2016**

	Average processing times (weeks)Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks)Oral Hearings
Blind Person's Pension	18.2	33.8
Carers Allowance	17.6	21.6
Carers Benefit	20.7	22.4
Child Benefit	22.1	38.2
Disability Allowance	14.6	20.1
Illness Benefit	27.2	34.3
Partial Capacity Benefit	27.3	33.6
Domiciliary Care Allowance	24.3	30.6
Deserted Wives Benefit	13.0	32.8
Farm Assist	21.9	26.0
Bereavement Grant	23.1	-
Death Benefit (Pension)	19.7	-
Liabile Relatives	14.0	16.9
Family Income Supplement	20.4	25.5
Invalidity Pension	21.3	28.2
Maternity Benefit	18.9	21.7
One Parent Family Payment	21.7	31.9
State Pension (Contributory)	25.6	45.9

Questions - Written Answers

	Average processing times (weeks)Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks)Oral Hearings
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	22.7	32.9
State Pension (Transition)	67.7	61.3
Occupational Injury Benefit	25.0	31.9
Disablement Pension	25.8	26.8
Incapacity Supplement	27.7	50.9
Guardian's Payment (Con)	15.8	24.5
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	18.4	23.3
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	16.7	25.5
Jobseeker's Allowance	16.0	20.9
BTW Family Dividend	21.0	-
Jobseeker's Transitional	19.0	22.3
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	32.5	31.6
Jobseeker's Benefit	16.0	27.2
Treatment Benefit	17.1	-
Carer's Support Grant *	18.1	23.3
Insurability of Employment	36.6	85.7
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	15.0	24.1
Survivor's Pension (Con)	16.6	28.8
Survivor's Pension (Non-con)	18.4	23.4
Widows Parent Grant	23.5	63.8
All Appeals	17.6	24.1

* Previously called Respite Care Grant

Appeal processing times by Scheme 01 January 2017- 30 June 2017

	Average processing times (weeks)Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks)Oral Hearings
Blind Person's Pension	16.0	24.4
Carers Allowance	20.6	23.0
Carers Benefit	15.5	21.5
Child Benefit	21.1	26.6
Disability Allowance	16.9	21.9
Illness Benefit	28.2	31.0
Partial Capacity Benefit	38.8	33.1
Domiciliary Care Allowance	24.1	30.7
Deserted Wives Benefit	-	13.7
Farm Assist	22.6	24.2
Bereavement Grant	15.1	-
Death Benefit (Pension)	102.1	-

	Average processing times (weeks)Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks)Oral Hearings
Family Income Supplement	17.7	30.4
Invalidity Pension	16.4	20.9
Liabile Relatives	18.9	24.1
Maternity Benefit	18.9	20.0
One Parent Family Payment	23.6	32.4
State Pension (Contributory)	25.7	37.7
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	21.6	35.3
State Pension (Transition)	-	81.4
Occupational Injury Benefit	14.3	28.4
Disablement Pension	19.7	31.9
Incapacity Supplement	54.2	41.5
Guardian's Payment (Con)	25.0	22.4
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	12.9	28.9
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	16.6	24.3
Jobseeker's Allowance	15.9	24.5
BTW Family Dividend	18.0	41.1
Jobseeker's Transitional	19.3	29.4
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	30.3	-
Jobseeker's Benefit	15.8	18.1
Carer's Support Grant *	17.9	23.7
Treatment Benefit	14.0	-
Insurability of Employment	37.8	93.1
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	16.5	24.3
Survivor's Pension (Con)	21.8	33.1
Survivor's Pension (Non-con)	24.2	21.9
Widowed Parent Grant	14.1	-
All Appeals	18.5	25.0

* Previously called Respite Care Grant

Live Register Data

439. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent to which she and her Department continue to monitor the age profile of those on the live register long term with a view to initiating measures to address the issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33501/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The official measure of unemployment is sourced from the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). Measures of un-

employment from the QNHS are based on International Labour Office (ILO) definitions. To be 'ILO unemployed' a person must in the week before the survey be without work but available for work and have recently taken specific job-search steps. The Live Register, which captures those registering for unemployment benefits (including those working part-time and in casual work who draw partial unemployment payments), is an administrative record. It is not the official measure of unemployment, but can give indicative trends. My Department uses both Live Register and QNHS data for reporting and monitoring trends and adjusting policies accordingly at national level.

This includes providing data and trends broken down by age categories and by duration of unemployment. The QNHS data, being prepared as part of the EU-wide Labour Force Survey, also allow Irish trends to be compared with international developments.

The Pathways to Work strategy, the key document setting out policy to facilitate the unemployed of all ages back into work, is underpinned by analyses of the labour market situation based on the statistical sources mentioned above.

By allocating activation resources to persons on the Live Register, the government's policy tends automatically to focus on those areas and age-groups in which unemployment is most concentrated. The focus on those most in need is further reinforced by the use of profiling to identify, among the newly unemployed, those most likely to face severe difficulties in re-entering employment. People identified as having a low PEX (probability of exit from unemployment) score are prioritised for intensive engagement and support from the Intreo employment service.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

440. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent to which progress has been made in addressing the issue whereby women are deprived of contributory pensions, having retired from the workplace while raising their families or due to the marriage ban, and who have made a major contribution to society in the course of their working lives; if their cases will be re-examined with a view to crediting them with sufficient contributions to enable them to qualify for State or retirement pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33502/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The State pension is a valuable benefit and is the bedrock of the pension system. There are two State pensions. The State pension (non-contributory) is a means-tested pension funded from taxation, whereas the State pension (contributory), is not means-tested and is paid from the Social Insurance Fund. Accordingly, it is important to ensure those qualifying for the latter have made a sustained contribution to the Social Insurance Fund over their working lives. To ensure that the individual can maximise their entitlement to a State pension (contributory), all contributions, paid or credited, over their working life from when they first enter insurable employment until pension age are taken into account when assessing their entitlement and the level of that entitlement.

The homemaker's scheme makes qualification for a higher rate of State pension contributory easier for those who take time out of the workforce for caring duties. The scheme, which was introduced in and took effect for periods from 1994, allows up to 20 years spent caring for children under 12 years of age, or caring for incapacitated people over that age, to be disregarded when a person's social insurance record is being averaged for pension purposes, subject to the standard qualifying conditions for State pension contributory also being satisfied. This has the effect of increasing the yearly average of the pensioner, which is used to set the rate of

his or her pension.

The marriage bar describes a rule that existed in most of the public service, and some private sector employments, where women were required to leave their employment upon marriage. The practice was abolished in 1973 when Ireland joined the EEC. As it was a rule rather than law, women who were required to leave their employment upon marriage were entitled to take up alternative employment in the private sector, and many did.

It is worth remembering that public servants affected by the marriage bar had paid a reduced PRSI, with no State pension (contributory) coverage. Accordingly, their continued employment in the public service would never have created an entitlement to the State pension (contributory). Instead, by impacting upon their continuing public service employment, the marriage bar's pension implications, where they exist, more generally relate to their eventual entitlement to a public service pension. Any questions regarding this issue are a matter for the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

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. Alternatively, they may qualify for a means-tested State pension non-contributory, which amounts up to 95% of the maximum contributory rate.

Work is under way to replace the yearly average system with a total-contributions approach. Under this approach, the rate of pension paid will more closely reflect the total number of contributions made by people, not when they paid them. The position of homemakers is being carefully considered in developing this new system of calculating the contributory State pension.

It is expected that this approach to pension qualification will replace the current one from 2020. Following completion of the actuarial review of the Social Insurance Fund later this year, a refined proposal will be developed. My Department will conduct a period of consultation with relevant stakeholders, including interest groups, representative bodies and the Oireachtas. Following the consultation period, I will submit a proposal to Government seeking approval for the new approach.

Departmental Functions

441. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the functions which her Department has or will assume from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation following the appointment of the new Government; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33512/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Following the announcement by An Taoiseach on 14 June of the transfer of labour affairs and labour law responsibilities from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to the Department of Social Protection, the process of identifying the functional areas, staff and resources that will transfer to my Department has begun. This is being done in accordance with the Transfer of Functions Guidelines and Best Practice Handbook, published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in 2016.

In accordance with those guidelines, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation is taking the lead in this process. When the details have been agreed in consultation with the Department of the Taoiseach, a Transfer of Functions Order will be brought to Government by the

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to give effect to the changes involved.

Job Initiatives

442. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the development and introduction of a new scheme to replace JobBridge; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33513/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): JobBridge was introduced in July 2011 in response to the sharp and dramatic increase in unemployment. A robust external evaluation of the scheme conducted by Indecon Economic Consultants in 2016 found that it is one of the most effective labour market programmes – increasing participants’ employment outcomes by 32%. It also found that while participants rated the scheme positively on 18 out of 20 aspects measured, most were dissatisfied with the level of payment and a sizable minority rated the scheme negatively on some aspects, for example the quality of training offered.

Based on these findings, and taking account of the improvement in labour market conditions, Indecon recommended that JobBridge be discontinued in its current form and replaced with a new scheme. A copy of the full evaluation can be found at: <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/JobBridge-Evaluation.aspx>.

The Labour Market Council welcomed the report and noted the positive employment impact of the scheme. A majority of the Council similarly recommended that JobBridge be replaced.

Having considered the evidence and the suggestions put forward by Indecon and the Labour Market Council, my predecessor as Minister for Social Protection announced his intention to replace JobBridge with a new work experience programme that would address criticisms of the scheme and would be better suited to the much improved labour market.

JobBridge was closed to new applications from 27th October 2016 to allow for a period of consultation with key stakeholders on design principles for any proposed new work experience programme and to facilitate an orderly wind down of the current scheme.

The consultation process is completed and I am currently considering options on how best to proceed.

JobsPlus Scheme

443. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons under 26 years of age who have applied for and been eligible for the JobsPlus scheme since its introduction, by county, in tabular form [33514/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): JobsPlus provides a direct monthly financial incentive to employers who recruit employees from the Live Register and those transitioning into employment. It provides employers with two levels of payment - €7,500 or €10,000 over two years - paid in monthly instalments provided the employment is maintained. The rate of payment depends on the length of time the person is unemployed.

The number of persons under 26 years of age who have applied for and been eligible for JobsPlus since the scheme began, by county, is shown in the following table.

Table 1: JobsPlus applicants under 26 years of age who have established eligibility -

(July 2013-July 2017)

County	Number
Carlow	236
Cavan	237
Clare	201
Cork	968
Donegal	536
Dublin	2,228
Galway	384
Kerry	401
Kildare	629
Kilkenny	337
Laois	289
Leitrim	105
Limerick	459
Longford	128
Louth	855
Mayo	326
Meath	482
Monaghan	249
Offaly	408
Roscommon	164
Sligo	215
Tipperary	715
Waterford	701
Westmeath	341
Wexford	824
Wicklow	411
Total:	12,829

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobsPlus Scheme

444. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her Department has carried out an analysis or evaluation of the JobsPlus scheme to ascertain if employers subsidised under the scheme have retained staff in the period after the subsidy is withdrawn; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33515/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy is aware, the JobsPlus incentive is designed to encourage employers and businesses to focus their recruitment efforts on those who have been out of work for long periods, or on young people seeking employment. It provides employers with two levels of payment - €7,500 or €10,000 - over two years, paid in monthly instalments, provided the employment is maintained. The rate of payment depends on the length of time the person employed has been on the Live Register.

My Department is currently undertaking a Focused Policy Assessment (FPA) on the incen-

tive. As part of this assessment, an analysis of a sample of JobsPlus employees was conducted between 30 and 36 months after their commencement date on the scheme. This analysis has shown that for employees who complete 24 months on the scheme, 79% remain with their current employer and 95% remain off the Live Register. The FPA will be finalised over the coming weeks.

I consider this a very favourable result and I believe it demonstrates the positive effect that JobsPlus has in getting people who are long-term unemployed into work.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Data

445. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons aged 18 to 21 and 22 to 24 years of age respectively on a community employment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33516/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The number of persons aged 18 to 21 and 22 to 24 years respectively, currently participating on CE are presented in tabular format below.

Community Employment figures as at end of March 2017

Age	Total number of Participants
18-21	340
22-24	591
Total	931

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

446. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will consider widening eligibility to the community employment schemes for young persons under 25 years of age who are on a social welfare payment for 12 months or more; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33517/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Following the publication of my Department's Report - An Analysis of the Community Employment Programme – earlier in the year, the Government approved a number of changes to the terms and conditions around participation on Community Employment (CE). The main purpose of these changes is to broaden the availability of CE to a greater number of people on the live register and to standardise other conditions around the length of time a person can participate on the programme. The changes will see the general qualifying age for CE for those in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment for 12 months or more, reduced from 25 to 21 years. It will also be easier for previous participants who have exhausted their CE entitlement to requalify, as participation prior to the year 2007 will be disregarded. Those aged between 21 and 55 years are entitled to one year on the programme, however, this can be extended by up to 2 more years if they are engaged in a recognised training or education award that is helping them progress towards employment. There will be an overall lifetime limit of 6 years from 2007 (or 7 years if on a disability payment).

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Data

447. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons under 26 years of age who are in receipt of disability allowance; the number of males and females in receipt of this payment in this age cohort; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33518/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The following table is a breakdown of persons in receipt of disability allowance (DA) under 26 years of age at the end of June 2017.

Male under 26	Female under 26	Total number of DA recipients under 26
10,969	6,856	17,825

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

One-Parent Family Payment Data

448. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons under 26 years of age who are in receipt of the one-parent family payment; the number of males and females in receipt of this payment in this age cohort; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33519/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the following table.

Number of Recipients of One Parent Family Payment under 26 years of age at end of June 2017

Age	Male	Female
15	0	6
16	0	35
17	0	80
18	1	204
19	0	435
20	1	652
21	2	955
22	1	1,245
23	5	1,687
24	6	1,887
25	6	2,106

Family Income Supplement Expenditure

449. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the projected funding provided for the family income supplement scheme in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33520/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Family Income Supple-

ment (FIS) is an in-work support, which provides an income top-up for employees on low earnings with children. FIS is designed to prevent in-work poverty for low paid workers with child dependants and to offer a financial incentive to take-up employment. There are currently almost 57,000 families with more than 126,000 children in receipt of FIS. The *Revised Estimates for Public Services 2017* provides for expenditure of €422.5 million on the Department's Family Income Supplement scheme in 2017. There has been a steady growth both in the number of families supported by FIS over recent years and in associated expenditure, with numbers in receipt of FIS rising from around 32,000 families with more than 73,000 children in 2012 to almost 57,000 families and over 125,000 children by the end of 2016.

Expenditure on FIS has more than doubled from €224 million in 2012 to an estimate of more than €422 million for this year.

A number of factors have led to the increase in take-up including a substantial increase in the numbers in employment, demographic factors and increases in the FIS thresholds in 2016.

The Department's information strategy has promoted the benefits of FIS and increased overall awareness of the scheme. This includes the use of the Department's Better Off in Work ready reckon as an effective means of promoting in work supports such as FIS.

Some of the increase in FIS numbers is also due to transfers from the One-Parent Family Payment arising from the reduction of the age threshold of the youngest child to 7 years, which occurred over the past four years.

Finally substantial improvements in customer service and processing times for FIS customers have also significantly contributed to the increased numbers of FIS recipients.

All the evidence shows that families are better off in work and FIS helps them to continue in work and build towards financial independence.

Carer's Allowance Applications

450. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33546/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for carer's allowance (CA) was received from the person concerned on 28 March 2017.

The application was awarded to the person concerned on 29 June 2017 and the first payment issued to their bank account on 29 June 2017. The person concerned had previously been in receipt of carer's benefit until 28 June 2017.

The person concerned was notified on 9 June 2017 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

451. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a state-

ment on the matter. [33548/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I confirm that my Department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 12 April 2017.

The application was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 23 June 2017 to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied. Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

452. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 481 of 21 March 2017, the rates of all weekly payments; the resulting rates if they were to be increased in line with the harmonised index of consumer prices for 2018; and the estimated cost of this increase per scheme identifying the full and partial year effect if relevant, in tabular form. [33549/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The information that the Deputy is looking for is detailed in the following table. The costs are based on the 1.8% Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices rate for 2018, forecast in the Department of Finance's 2017 Budget Day publication.

Scheme	Total Full Year Cost - €m	Rate of Payment 2017	Proposed Rate of Payment 2018
Social Insurance Schemes			
State Pension (Contributory)	€ 85.74	€238.30	€242.50
Widow/er's or Surviving Civil Partner's (Con) Pension - Under 66	€ 5.45	€198.50	€202.10
Widow/er's or Surviving Civil Partner's (Con) Pension - 66 and Over	€ 17.74	€238.30	€242.50
Deserted Wife's Benefit - Under 66	€ 0.75	€198.50	€202.10
Deserted Wife's Benefit - 66 and Over	€ 0.47	€238.30	€242.50
Invalidity Pension	€ 11.46	€198.50	€202.10
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)	€ 0.17	€176.00	€179.20
Death Benefit Pension - Under 66	€ 0.08	€223.50	€227.50

Questions - Written Answers

Scheme	Total Full Year Cost - €m	Rate of Payment 2017	Proposed Rate of Payment 2018
Death Benefit Pension – 66 and Over	€ 0.07	€242.70	€247.00
Disablement Pension	€ 0.99	€224.00	€228.00
Illness Benefit	€ 9.86	€193.00	€196.40
Injury Benefit	€ 0.28	€193.00	€196.40
Jobseeker's Benefit	€ 5.74	€193.00	€196.40
Carer's Benefit	€ 0.62	€210.00	€213.80
Health and Safety Benefit	€ 0.01	€193.00	€196.40
Maternity & Adoptive Benefit	€ 4.71	€235.00	€239.20
Paternity Benefit	€ 0.15	€235.00	€239.20
Social Assistance Schemes			
State Pension (Non Con)	€ 20.04	€227.00	€231.00
Blind Person's Pension	€ 0.23	€193.00	€196.40
Widow/ers or Surviving Civil Partner's (Non-Con)	€ 0.25	€198.50	€202.10
Deserted Wife's Allowance	€ 0.02	€198.50	€202.10
One-Parent Family Payment	€ 7.07	€193.00	€196.40
Carer's Allowance - Under 66	€ 8.09	€209.00	€212.80
Carer's Allowance – 66 and Over	€ 0.54	€247.00	€251.40
Half Rate Carer's Allowance - Under 66	€ 2.22	€104.50	€106.40
Half Rate Carer's Allowance – 66 and Over	€ 1.30	€123.50	€125.70
Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)	€ 0.08	€176.00	€179.20
Jobseeker's Allowance – 26 and Over	€ 35.18	€193.00	€196.40
Jobseeker's Allowance – Under 25	€ 2.01	€102.70	€104.50
Jobseeker's Allowance – Aged 25	€ 0.51	€147.80	€150.40
Pre-Retirement Allowance	€ 0.01	€193.00	€196.40
Disability Allowance	€ 25.47	€193.00	€196.40

Scheme	Total Full Year Cost - €m	Rate of Payment 2017	Proposed Rate of Payment 2018
Farm Assist	€ 1.68	€193.00	€196.40
Employment Support Schemes (BTWA & BTEA)	€ 3.29	€193.00	€196.40
Employment/Internship Schemes (CE, Tús, RSS etc.)	€ 7.72	€215.50	€219.30
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	€ 3.14	€191.00	€194.40
TOTAL	€ 263.16		

The costings listed above include proportionate increases for qualified adults and for those on reduced rates of payment, where relevant. It should also be noted that these costings are subject to change over the coming months in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2018.

Questions Nos. 453 and 454 answered with Question No. 431.

Back to Education Allowance Data

455. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated cost of each €1 increase to the age reduced back to education weekly rate in 2018; and the full year effect. [33552/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) scheme is one of a range of activation supports and policies administered by my Department. The main focus of the BTEA is to assist qualifying applicants to improve their qualifications and, therefore, improve their prospects of returning to sustainable employment. The objective of the scheme is to raise the educational and skill levels to enable jobseekers better access to the emerging needs of the labour market.

The number of new participants under 25 years of age who were supported under the BTEA at the end of the 2016/17 academic year was 2,948. From September 1st 2017, all students participating on BTEA will be paid at the maximum weekly rate applicable to their underlying scheme of entitlement. The removal of the age-related rate of €160 per week for these students would cost €3.8m for a full academic year. The full cost will be known once all of the applications for the upcoming 2017/18 academic year are received and approved.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

456. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an appeal for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33556/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following a successful appeal, the person concerned has been awarded disability allowance

with effect from 25 January 2017. The first payment will be made by her chosen payment method on 9 August 2017.

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.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

457. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a domiciliary care allowance by a person (detail supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33558/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Department is currently experiencing delays in the processing of Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) claims. We are extremely sorry for any worry or concern this may cause to parents/guardians of children with additional care needs. At present it is taking 20 weeks on average to finalise an application. Applications are processed in date of receipt order. There are a number of factors that have contributed to the extended time required to process claims;

First, there is a significant increase in the volume of applications being received. The numbers applying for DCA have increased significantly since 2009, when the Department took over administration of the scheme from the HSE. The year on year increase in volumes over recent years has consistently been in the 15-20% range due to an increase in population and more awareness of the scheme. Over 1,000 claims were received in May, along with a further 700 in June; whereas the average would have been 400 per month a few years ago.

Secondly, following a High Court ruling in 2016, there is now a need for the Department's medical assessors to provide the deciding officer with a more detailed opinion on the child's eligibility for the scheme and for the deciding officer in turn to provide more detailed reasons for their decision when communicating this to the customer. These factors have resulted in the time taken to finalise applications increasing significantly and as a result the numbers being processed have reduced and the timescale to finalise each application has increased

Corrective actions are being taken, with additional deciding officers assigned to work on the scheme. Once these deciding officers become fully operational, the increase in claim processing capacity should allow for an improvement in processing times.

An application for DCA in respect of this child was received in the Department on the 24th April 2017. The applications current being finalised were received in February 2017. This application will be considered by a Deciding Officer and the decision notified as soon as possible.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

458. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an application for a domiciliary care allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33561/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received from this lady on the 1st September 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 8th December 2016 outlining the decision.

A request for a review of this decision was received on the 22nd February 2017 and additional information was supplied. The application and all supporting documentation was re-examined by a deciding officer who did not consider a revision of the original decision to be warranted. The child's medical diagnosis is not disputed, neither is the fact that the child has additional care needs. However, in the view of the deciding officer, the evidence provided does not indicate that the level of additional support required is substantially in excess of that required by other children of the same age without this disability. The lady concerned was notified of the outcome of this review in a letter dated 15th June 2017.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

459. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an appeal for a domiciliary care allowance for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33563/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received in respect of this child on the 20th October 2016. This application was not allowed as the child was not considered to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the allowance. A letter issued on the 2nd February 2017 outlining the decision of the deciding officer to refuse the allowance and advising of the right to appeal the decision.

An appeal was registered on 2nd March 2017 and additional information on the child's condition/care needs has since been supplied, with the most recent information received on the 27th June. The application and all the supporting evidence provided to date will be re-examined by a deciding officer and a revised decision will be made if warranted, or alternatively, the case will be referred for consideration by the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

The person concerned will be notified of the outcome of the deciding officer's review as soon as it is completed. Currently, such reviews are taking approximately 18 weeks to complete.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Housing Policy

460. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views on a media report by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33173/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): This Government recognises the housing access and affordability pressures faced by many households, particularly in certain parts of the country. It is for this reason that the overarching objective of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is to increase the supply of new homes to 25,000 per annum by 2020 and, in particular, to

boost the supply of high quality social and affordable homes, to buy or rent, as quickly as possible, in areas where demand is greatest.

With particular regard to the needs of those on the social housing waiting lists, Rebuilding Ireland set a target of delivering 47,000 social housing units through build, refurbishment, acquisition and leasing over the period to 2021, alongside an accelerated roll-out of the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme to some 80,000 households.

This activity is being supported through a significantly increased investment programme of €5.35 billion, comprising €4.5 billion in capital funding and €844 million in support of programmes funded from current expenditure. A further €226 million is provided for the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund for investment in key enabling infrastructure to open up lands for early development.

While still at an early stage of implementation, there is already strong evidence that the focus on increasing and accelerating housing supply in Rebuilding Ireland is yielding results. In terms of social housing, in 2016, the housing needs of over 19,000 households were met through a range of social housing programmes, supported by expenditure of over €935 million. A further €1.3 billion has been provided in 2017 to support the accelerated delivery of social housing and the achievement of the 2017 target to meet the housing needs of over 21,000 households.

In terms of housing more broadly, a suite of measures have been put in place to make housing construction viable at more affordable price points, including the €226m Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund; leveraging the value of State-owned lands to deliver a more affordable rental offering in Rent Pressure Zones; streamlined planning systems for housing developments; and other planning reforms to provide flexibility to deliver viable housing schemes and apartment developments in the right locations. In addition, analysis of vacant dwellings data from the Census 2016 provides strong evidence for targeted policies to maximise the number of vacant properties that can be brought back into use, especially in our cities and large towns where demand is greatest.

While we are coming from a low base, all recent key indicators show that the house-building sector is continuing to gather strength and pace. Planning permissions for 17,934 new homes were granted in the twelve-month period to end March 2017, representing a 39% increase year on year. Commencement Notices for 15,579 new homes nationwide were submitted in the twelve-month period to end May 2017, a 42% increase year on year. ESB connections for the twelve-month period to end May 2017 reached 16,340 across the country, showing a 19% increase year on year. Furthermore, the recently published RTB Rent Index shows a significant moderation in the rate of rent increases, with rents virtually flat during the first quarter of 2017.

While this is encouraging, considerable further progress is needed and we will continue to closely monitor trends in that regard. In addition, a focused review of Rebuilding Ireland is now underway, targeted for completion in September. The aim of the review is to build on the significant progress already being made, strengthen the measures in place and identify additional measures to underpin further momentum in the months and years ahead.

Foreshore Licence Applications

461. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the measures taken by his Department to ensure no conflicts of interest arise in the foreshore lease licence application system; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [33175/17]

462. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the sequence of steps for both the applicant and the competent authority in the statutory process application for a foreshore lease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33176/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 461 and 462 together.

My Department places a high priority on public participation during the assessment of foreshore applications.

At the initial stage in the process, the pre-application stage, the developer initially discusses the project with my Department and is encouraged to engage in pre-application consultations with stakeholders including the local community.

The formal application and supporting document when received from the applicant for a foreshore licence/lease is reviewed for completeness prior to the commencement of the foreshore consultation process. The extent of the consultation undertaken is determined by the size, nature and scale of the project and whether the application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In general, non EIS cases are the subject of a 21 day public consultation period whereas the consultation period for EIS cases is two months.

The following steps are undertaken as part of the Prescribed Body consultation process:

- Write to the prescribed bodies inviting observations on the application and supporting documentation;
- Accept receipt of submissions from the prescribed bodies;
- Provide all submissions to the applicant;
- Accept responses from the applicant in relation to the issues raised under the public consultation;
- Facilitate further discussion/correspondence where necessary between the applicant and the prescribed bodies in relation to observations received from the prescribed bodies;
- Publish the submissions (in batches) and the applicant's responses on my Department's website.

In terms of public consultation, the following steps are undertaken;

- Announce public consultation through advertisement in a number of publications;
- Receive submissions from public and other interested parties;
- Acknowledge receipt of submissions;
- Provide all submissions to the applicant;
- Receive responses from the applicant in relation to the issues/concerns raised under the public consultation;
- Publish the submissions (in batches) and the applicant's responses on my Department's website.

In order to determine whether the proposed works are of a class that would require a mandatory EIS under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive, my Department as the competent authority is required to undertake an EIA Screening. Similarly, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening is undertaken to determine whether the proposed development requires a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

All the application documentation including submissions received and environmental screening reports are then considered by the Marine Licence Vetting Committee (MLVC), a multi-disciplinary advisory body that provides an assessment and recommendation on the proposal.

In accordance with foreshore legislation, the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government is the Minister with responsibility for making the decision on this application. A decision will only be made following the careful examination and consideration of the application and supporting documentation and all views/comments received including those of the prescribed bodies and the public.

My Department would expect that the robust foreshore procedures and application process steps outlined above would identify any potential conflict at an early stage in the foreshore consent process and appropriate steps would be taken to address any conflict arising. If there is a particular case in which it is considered a potential conflict of interest has arisen, if the Deputy provides the relevant details, I will be happy to provide further information.

Housing Grant Payments

463. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the details of the funding allocation of housing grant aids, including mobility aids housing grant scheme, housing adaptation grant for people with a disability and housing aid for older people, by local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33238/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): On 29 May 2017, funding of €59.8m million was announced by my Department for the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability, which is an increase of some 6% on the previous year's allocation. Some 8,000 households benefitted under the Scheme in 2016, and with this additional funding, it is hoped to increase this to 10,000 in 2017.

Details of the allocations for 2017 are available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/rebuilding-ireland/older-people/minister-co-veney-announces-eu598million-improve-homes-older>.

Voluntary Housing Sector

464. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the regulation that governs the setting of rents by voluntary housing agencies and the rights tenants of such bodies have in appealing new rents set by such bodies; the guidelines his Department has for the setting of rents by voluntary housing bodies. [33250/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The normal legislative provisions of the Residential Tenancies Acts governing rent setting, rent reviews and notices of changed rents for private rented tenancies, do not apply to

Approved Housing Body (AHB) tenancies. Instead, these matters are governed by the tenancy agreements, leases or financing arrangements in place.

Where social housing units are provided by AHBs under Payment and Availability (P&A) arrangements with local authorities, it is a condition of such funding that rents must be determined in accordance with the differential rents scheme of the housing authority in which the house is situated. This mechanism accounts for a significant element of the housing currently being delivered by AHBs.

Where housing is provided by AHBs under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS), my Department's historical guidance states that rents should be at levels which are reasonable having regard to the tenant's income and the outlay of the AHB on the accommodation, including the ongoing property management costs. AHBs are also required to consult with the local authority in relation to the setting of rents.

It should be noted that provision has been made in the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 for the Residential Tenancies Board to have a dispute resolution role in relation to AHB tenancy rent setting and reviews. In summary, an AHB tenant may refer a dispute to the RTB for resolution as to whether the initial rent set for their tenancy or a rent arising from a rent review is in line with the provisions of tenancy arrangements, leases or financing arrangements in place. This provides an important protection for AHB tenants in situations where a dispute arises in relation to these matters.

Notwithstanding this, it is timely that the overall approach to rents in the AHB sector would be subject to review and my Department will be considering this matter later this year, in consultation with the AHB sector and local authorities, taking account also of work being undertaken in relation to the development of a national framework of differential rents.

Local Authority Housing Funding

465. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans for additional resources to fund home extension projects for local authority tenants through the overcrowding extensions; his views on whether this will help alleviate the housing lists and stop the increasing trend in over crowding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33251/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department provides capital funding to Local Authorities to undertake adaptations and extensions to their existing social housing stock. The scheme supports local authorities to provide extensions needed to address over-crowding and can be hugely beneficial to the families concerned, while also alleviating the need for new social housing units to be provided.

In 2017, my Department is making €12 million available to local authorities to enable them to undertake adaptations and extensions under this scheme and is currently working with each local authority in terms of their funding requirements and local needs under the Scheme.

Building Regulations

466. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans to set up a building regulations advisory authority to allow broader input from industry experts (details supplied) that wish to have input into the area of

planning control; his views on whether this would be beneficial in improving an imperfect system. [33252/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I understand the body referred to in the Deputy's question is the Building Regulations Advisory Body (BRAB). Section 14 of the Building Control Act 1990 provides for the establishment, at the Minister's discretion, of a BRAB to advise the Minister on matters relating to building regulations.

The term of office of the last BRAB expired on 1 October 2012. The members of that BRAB were appointed for a term of office of five years from 14 June 2007 to 13 June 2012. A temporary extension to 1 October 2012 was granted to the existing members in light of the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations which were at an advanced stage of development at that time.

In accordance with Appendix IIB of the Government's Public Service Reform Plan, published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in November 2011, the BRAB was listed as one of the forty six "Candidate Bodies for Critical Review by end June 2012". The outcome of that review process was that the work of the BRAB was to be absorbed into my Department.

I have no plans to establish a new BRAB at this time.

Housing Policy

467. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans to review the policy of relying on the private sector to build homes and instead give local authorities more of a central role in building in order to address housing lists in view of expert views, as well as the fact that supply does not equate to more affordable homes. [33253/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness includes a clear intent to increase the level and speed of delivery of social housing, as part of the Government's approach to addressing the current challenges in the housing sector. The target to deliver 47,000 social housing units through build, refurbishment, acquisition and leasing over the period 2016 to 2021 envisages a central role for local authorities, through their own development programmes and working co-operatively with the approved housing body (AHB) sector. In addition, local authorities have a lead role in the roll out of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme in meeting the needs of some 80,000 households.

This development activity for social housing is being supported through a significantly increased investment programme of €5.35 billion. While still at an early stage of implementation, there is already strong evidence that the focus on increasing and accelerating housing supply in Rebuilding Ireland is yielding results. In 2016, the housing needs of over 19,000 households were met through a range of housing programmes, supported by expenditure of over €935 million. A further €1.3 billion has been provided for 2017 to support the accelerated delivery of social housing and the achievement of the 2017 target to meet the housing needs of over 21,000 households.

While the delivery of social housing through the Part V process will be utilised to the fullest extent, this will be far exceeded by the activity of local authorities and AHBs who already have large scale social housing development programmes underway. This can be seen

in the Status Reports on Social Housing Construction Projects which my Department has published, the latest of which is for the period to end Quarter 1 2017 and is available at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/social-housing-construction-projects-report-2017/>.

The report provides details of over 600 social housing projects, involving the construction of over 10,000 new social homes across the 31 local authority areas. The scale of the construction pipeline represents a major escalation in the social housing build programme and more projects are being added on an ongoing basis, to ensure we deliver on the Rebuilding Ireland targets.

In addition, a focused review of Rebuilding Ireland is now underway, targeted for completion in September. The aim of the review is to build on the significant progress already being made, strengthen the measures in place and identify additional measures to underpin further momentum in the months and years ahead.

Building Regulations

468. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the way in which to address the matter of substandard work carried out in the past by developers who are already building new developments. [33254/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under the Building Control Acts 1990 to 2014, primary responsibility for compliance with the requirements of the Building Regulations rests with the owners, designers and builders of buildings. Enforcement of the Building Regulations is a matter for the 31 local building control authorities who have extensive powers of inspection and enforcement under the Acts. Neither I nor my Department has any direct role in relation to enforcement matters and cannot interfere in individual cases.

In general, building defects are matters for resolution between the contracting parties involved: the homeowner, the builder, the developer and/or their respective insurers, structural guarantee or warranty scheme. It is important to note that while my Department has overall responsibility for establishing and maintaining an effective regulatory framework for building standards and building control it has no general statutory role in resolving defects in privately owned buildings, including apartments, nor does it have a budget for such matters.

In response to the many building failures that have emerged over the past decade, my Department introduced the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 9 of 2014), which require greater accountability in relation to compliance with Building Regulations in the form of statutory certification of design and construction by registered construction professionals and builders, lodgement of compliance documentation, mandatory inspections during construction and validation and registration of certificates.

A Certificate of Compliance on Completion is jointly signed by the builder and the assigned certifier. This must be accompanied by plans and documentation to show how the constructed building complies with the building regulations and also the inspection plan, as implemented.

At the end of May 2017, the Government approved the draft heads of a Bill to place the Construction Industry Register Ireland (CIRI) on a statutory footing and this Bill has now been referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government for pre-legislative scrutiny. Once it is enacted the Bill will provide consumers who engage a registered builder the assurance that they are dealing with a competent and compliant operator and will complement the reforms which have been made through the Building Control

Amendment Regulations and contribute to the development of a culture of competence and compliance in the construction sector.

Foreshore Licence Applications

469. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied regarding the submitted observation on a foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33328/17]

471. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied regarding the submitted observation on a foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33330/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 469 and 471 together.

My Department does not have any input into the content or views contained within submissions provided by the prescribed bodies as part of the foreshore consultation process and as such is not privy as to how such content was arrived at within the internal structures of these bodies.

Any question related to the content of the responses received from the prescribed bodies would therefore be a matter for the prescribed bodies themselves.

Foreshore Licence Applications

470. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the research and investigations undertaken which led to the observation submitted by Met Éireann in its role as a named external consultee, advising him as the consenting authority, on a foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway Bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33329/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Met Éireann's observation network is operated according to World Meteorological Organisation guidelines which, inter alia, recommend minimum distances between developments and observing sites. Applying these criteria, there are no observing sites which might be affected by the proposed development and this is reflected in Met Éireann's response on the foreshore application concerned.

Question No. 471 answered with Question No. 469.

Brexit Documents

472. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33338/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan

Murphy): Following on from publication of the document setting out the Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations, work is underway across Departments to prepare adaptive Sectorial Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectorial challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders and will encompass the following themes:

Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;

Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;

Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;

Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;

Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

All of this work is ongoing and must also respond to the emerging developments in the Brexit negotiations. There is no decision as yet on publication dates.

Brexit is a Government-wide issue and my Department has established structures to manage its input to the cross-Government work underway. While no immediate large scale issues have been identified within the remit of my Department at this point in time, we are inputting into discussions and deliberations taking place centrally.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Eligibility

473. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if an exception can be made for a person whose only source of income is social welfare to purchase their house under the tenant incremental purchase scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33351/17]

487. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans to review the local authority tenant purchase scheme in view of the difficulties tenants are having with income threshold and discount; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33557/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 473 and 487 together.

The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme came into operation on 1 January 2016. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least 1 year.

The minimum reckonable income for eligibility under the Scheme is determined by the relevant housing authority in accordance with the detailed provisions of the Ministerial Direction issued under Sections 24(3) and (4) of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. In the determination of the minimum reckonable income, housing authorities can include income

from a number of different sources and classes, such as from employment, private pensions, maintenance payments and certain social welfare payments, including pensions, where the social welfare payment is secondary to employment income.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the scheme, it is essential that an applicant's income is of a long-term and sustainable nature. This is necessary to ensure that the tenant purchasing the house is in a financial position, as the owner, to maintain and insure the property for the duration of the charged period, in compliance with the conditions of the order transferring the ownership of, and responsibility for, the house from the local authority to the tenant.

In line with the commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, a review of the first 12 months of the Tenant Purchase Scheme's operation has been undertaken. The review has incorporated analysis of comprehensive data received from local authorities regarding the operation of the scheme during 2016 and a wide-ranging public consultation process which saw submissions received from individuals, elected representatives and organisations.

The review is now complete and a full report setting out findings and recommendations has been prepared. Following consultation with relevant Departments on implementation arrangements, I expect that definitive proposals will be submitted to me very shortly.

Foreshore Licence Applications

474. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the position regarding a foreshore lease application (details supplied) in respect of a Marine Institute renewable energy testing site off An Spidéal in Galway bay; when a final decision will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33353/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The compilation of the Marine Licence Vetting Committee (MLVC) Report which is a key element of the foreshore decision-making process was completed on 6 July 2017. I expect the application in question to be submitted for a decision in the coming weeks.

Rental Accommodation Scheme Administration

475. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if a person who is on the rental accommodation scheme, RAS, can remain on the local authority housing waiting list or transfer list; if their years on the RAS can be recognised in view of the fact that they have no long term security of tenure while on the RAS scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33360/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2009, gives legislative recognition to rental accommodation availability agreements which underpin the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) as a form of social housing support. Consequently, since 1 April 2011, RAS tenants are now considered to be in receipt of social housing support and should not generally remain on housing waiting lists for new applicants for social housing.

Recognising that tenants housed through RAS prior to this change might have had reasonable expectations in regard to retaining access to traditional local authority rented accommodation, guidance issued from the Housing Agency in 2011 recommended that there should be a

special transfer pathway for pre-2011 RAS tenants to other forms of social housing support. The arrangement effectively allowed these households to be designated as a 'transfer' applicant and to maintain their position for allocation as they had on the main waiting list.

All tenants allocated RAS accommodation post 1st April 2011 (and thus under the provisions of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009) were informed at the time of offer and allocation, that because RAS is now a social housing support, their housing need is met and that they will no longer remain on the main social housing waiting list.

However, it is recommended that allocation schemes also provide a 'transfer pathway' for new RAS tenants, whereby households in RAS have access to the transfer list in the same way as tenants in local authority accommodation.

Where a vacant property arises, it is a matter for individual housing authorities, in accordance with their allocation schemes, to determine whether the allocation is made to a household on the main waiting list, or to a transfer applicant, such as a household from RAS, and the method of such allocation. It is open to housing authorities to specify in their allocation schemes the proportion of allocations which will be reserved for transfers, and within this, how many may be reserved for households seeking transfers to other forms of social housing support.

Housing Assistance Payments Implementation

476. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans to extend the homeless housing assistance payment scheme outside County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33459/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): A specific and targeted service for homeless households, who can benefit from the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme has been available across the four housing authorities in the Dublin Region since February 2015, and is being implemented by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE). The focus is on transitioning qualified households from emergency accommodation into private rented tenancies. However, support is also provided to prevent households from entering emergency accommodation and homeless services. In addition, a Homeless Placefinder Service is also operating in Cork City since May 2017.

While eligible households may source accommodation for themselves, the dedicated placement team, the Homeless Placefinder Service, engages directly with property owners and supports qualified households to find suitable tenancies, and to ensure that any additional supports that may be needed are put in place. Homeless-specific HAP in Dublin encompasses additional flexibility to exceed the specific rent limit by up to 50%; in Cork this flexibility is up to 20% above the maximum rent limit.

The Service has relationships with local estate agents and property owners and can identify properties quickly. In addition, the Placefinder Service can support homeless households to secure a tenancy by providing up-front payments for deposits and rent. The cost of these deposits is recouped by the Department of Social Protection in respect of eligible households, and the HAP Shared Service Centre (SSC) facilitates the payment of HAP rent payments to landlords, on behalf of local authorities, as is the case ordinarily in the operation of the HAP scheme.

There are currently more than 1,600 formerly homeless households whose needs are being supported by the homeless specific HAP supports in the Dublin region, with an average of 32 additional Dublin households a week in 2017 being supported by homeless HAP.

There are no plans to expand the operation of the Homeless Placefinder Service outside of the Dublin Region and Cork City. I am satisfied that the HAP scheme is generally working well, despite the challenging rental market, but I will keep its operation under on-going review.

Social and Affordable Housing Funding

477. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views on developing an off balance sheet special purpose vehicle to allow an organisation (details supplied) and similar bodies to invest substantial funds in social housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33460/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness emphasises the need to look at new ways of funding social housing delivery, in particular the need to provide structural, funding and policy supports to increase delivery of social housing by Approved Housing Bodies.

In that context, it states that support will be provided to an Irish Council for Social Housing/sector-led new special purpose vehicle, involving investors which could potentially include the organisation referred to.

Funding for the Irish Council for Social Housing totalling some €49,000 to support this initiative was announced on 15 May 2017. The funding is being made available to the Council to establish a sector-led financial vehicle to allow AHBs to expand and facilitate the delivery of additional housing units. This funding was approved under the AHB Innovation Fund and was part of a total amount of €104,043 that was allocated across a number of AHBs. The Innovation Fund was established, in line with the commitment made in Rebuilding Ireland, to provide AHBs with the means to test innovative ideas on new funding structures and to build capacity.

Social and Affordable Housing

478. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the blockages and issues that are affecting the deadlines as set out in Rebuilding Ireland for the rapid build housing scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33461/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I am not aware of any specific blockages and issues that are affecting the rapid build housing schemes. There have been significant discussions with local authorities to ramp-up rapid build delivery, which local authorities have been responding to positively and are working hard to ensure that each project is completed and occupied by tenants at the earliest possible date.

While procurement issues had previously presented challenges for local authorities in terms of advancing rapid build housing schemes, the establishment of a framework of rapid build contractors by the Office of Government Procurement earlier this year, has meant that local authorities across the country can now run quicker procurement competitions and advance rapid build projects to site more efficiently and effectively. Indeed, my Department recently ran a workshop for all local authorities and approved housing bodies (AHBs) on rapid build issues in order to provide guidance on how to use the new framework and so as to support local authorities and AHBs to continue to roll out the rapid build programme.

Over 500 rapid build homes are now advancing through the planning design, procurement and construction stages, and work is underway to ensure that a further 500 units are advanced in the coming months, bringing the number of units in the programme to 1,000 by end year. An additional 500 units are targeted for delivery in 2018.

Student Accommodation

479. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the measures being taken to increase the supply of dedicated student accommodation to free up units in the general rental market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33462/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): A number of measures, many of which come under Pillar 4 of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan For Housing and Homelessness, are being progressed to support greater provision of student accommodation, and thereby also increasing the availability of dwellings within the general rental market, particularly in our cities and large towns.

Based on construction activity figures compiled by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in April 2017, a total of 1,067 additional bed spaces of purpose-built student accommodation have been completed since the publication of Rebuilding Ireland in July 2016. Furthermore, over 9,800 additional student accommodation bed spaces are expected to be developed by both Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) and private developments nationally by 2019, based on projects currently under construction (4,300 bed spaces) and projects where planning permission has been applied for (3,500 bed spaces) or is already granted (c.2,000 bed spaces). A process for monitoring of delivery of these proposed developments has also been put in place.

To assist with access to finance, the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 includes provisions enabling the HEIs to access finance from the Housing Finance Agency specifically for student accommodation projects.

In addition, student accommodation complexes of 200 or more bed spaces will benefit from the new fast-track application process directly to An Bord Pleanála under the 2016 Act. This will have major potential to cut processing time and enhance certainty in the provision of new accommodation projects.

In order to maximise the potential for student accommodation provision on suitable sites as part of mixed developments, an inventory of publicly owned lands has been assembled by my Department. The information, including the mapping of the sites identified, was published in April 2017 and is available via the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link:

<http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/rebuilding-ireland-land-map-2/> .

The combination of these measures will allow for the freeing up of units in the general rental market as students move towards purpose-built student accommodation units, giving other households in the rental sector a better chance to avail of rental accommodation.

It should be noted also that, under Rebuilding Ireland, the Department of Education and Skills committed to the preparation of a Student Accommodation Strategy and I understand that the work on this is now at an advanced stage.

Planning Issues

480. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government further to his reiteration of the previous Minister's position (details supplied), the way in which his Department has communicated this position to the local planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála to allow them to continue to make timely determinations on planning applications for proposed solar PV developments using the planning policy and guidance that is in force; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33463/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): As stated previously, and as is the case with the large majority of development types, there are no specific planning guidelines in place in respect of solar farms. Proposals for individual solar farm developments are subject to the statutory requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in the same manner as other proposed developments. Planning applications are made to the relevant local planning authority with a right of appeal to An Bord Pleanála.

In making decisions on planning applications, planning authorities and the Board must consider the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, having regard to the provisions of the local development plan, any submissions or observations received and relevant Ministerial or Government policies, including any relevant guidelines issued by my Department. Planning authorities must then make their own decisions based on the specific merits or otherwise of individual planning applications.

Therefore, it is inherent that the planning code facilitates the assessment of individual planning applications for solar farm developments, even in the absence of specific planning guidelines, and the necessity of advising planning authorities and the Board accordingly does not arise.

However, the issue of guidelines for solar farm developments will be kept under review, in consultation with my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, who has lead responsibility on renewable energy policy. In the event that is decided at a later stage that such guidelines may be required, my Department would consult further with planning authorities and the Board in that regard.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

481. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the steps he is taking to maximise the use of State-owned lands to deliver affordable rental properties in areas of high demand as part of his rental sector strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33464/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Government recognises the housing affordability pressures faced by households, particularly in certain parts of the country. It is for this reason that the overarching objective of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is to increase the supply of new homes to 25,000 units per annum. In particular, the aim is to increase the supply of high quality social and affordable homes, to buy or rent, as quickly as possible, in areas where demand is greatest.

As set out in the Strategy for the Rental Sector, published in December 2016, the commitment to develop an affordable rental model, originally contained in Rebuilding Ireland, is now being progressed by local authorities in Rent Pressure Zones, through leveraging the value of their land to deliver a more affordable rental offering.

In this regard, Dublin City Council and the Housing Agency, in partnership with Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, have developed detailed proposals for specific sites they control in Dublin. My Department is currently working through those proposals with the project sponsors.

On 27 April, details of some 1,700 hectares of land in local authority and Housing Agency ownership were published on the Rebuilding Ireland Land Map, with the potential to deliver some 42,500 homes nationally. All local authorities have now been requested to prepare Strategic Development and Management Plans for their lands by end September 2017.

The final model to develop each site, including an affordable rental element where appropriate, will be informed by the outcome of the consideration of the initial pathfinder sites in Dublin City and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown. In parallel, as part of the targeted review of Rebuilding Ireland initiated recently, my Department is examining the broader issue of housing affordability. Again, the outcome of the consideration of the specific proposals on the pathfinder sites will be factored into that review process.

Urban Renewal Schemes

482. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he or his Department considered a town centre renewal initiative as part of the strategy for the rental sector in order to fast track the return of vacant stock into use in our town and village centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33465/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Strategy for the Rental Sector did not specifically consider a town centre renewal initiative. However, the Programme for a Partnership Government, published in May 2016, set 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.

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. A number of measures were included in Rebuilding Ireland, particularly under Pillar 5, aimed at bringing vacant housing stock into re-use and have already been launched, including the Repair and Leasing Scheme and the Buy and Renew Scheme.

The Repair and Leasing Scheme is targeted at owners of vacant properties who cannot afford or access the funding needed to bring their properties up to the required 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 up to a maximum of €40,000 will be met up-front by the local authority or an approved housing body (AHB). In recognition of both the critical demand for units and the potential the RLS has to offer, an additional €26m was assigned to fund the scheme in 2017, which brings the total amount available this year to €32m. This additional investment in 2017 means that delivery under the scheme can be accelerated and up to 800 vacant properties can be brought back into use as new homes for families on local authority waiting lists this year.

The Buy and Renew Scheme supports local authorities and AHBs to purchase and renew vacant dwellings that require remediation, and make them available for social housing use in areas of housing need. The focus under this scheme, is on older stock, and in particular derelict properties which, when complete, will improve streetscapes in towns and other urban areas as well as providing much needed accommodation. Up to €25 million is available for the 'Buy and

Renew' Scheme in 2017 and depending on take-up, could increase up to €50 million in 2018.

In addition, a €70m rolling fund has been made available to the Housing Agency to enable it to purchase vacant properties from the portfolios of financial institutions and investors for social housing use.

To drive forward these and other considerations, a Ministerial-led Working Group was established to bring forward proposals for new urban regeneration measures. It is intended that the new measures would complement the existing regeneration programme under my Department's Social Housing Capital Programme, as well as other social regeneration initiatives already under way. The Working Group is considering a number of town centre renewal initiatives, and is assessing the capacity of existing or new funding streams before finalising its recommendations.

To further assist in the area of urban regeneration, my colleague, the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, launched the Town and Village Renewal Scheme in August 2016, with an initial allocation of €10 million in funding. In this regard, a sum of €380,000 was made available to each of the 31 local authorities under the initial phase of the scheme, and a full list of towns benefitting under the scheme is available on that 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/> .

Increased funding of €12 million has been provided in 2017 to enhance this scheme, with a view to increasing the attractiveness and sustainability of our towns and villages as places in which to live and work.

Finally, the Deputy may be aware of the Retail Consultation Forum, chaired by my colleague the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, which launched its new "Framework for Town Centre Renewal" on 25 April 2017, incorporating an Action Plan to support Town Centre Renewal.

Departmental Strategies

483. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the tax and fiscal incentives to encourage additional supply which have been considered as part of his rental sector strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33466/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Strategy for the Rental Sector, published by my Department in December 2016, committed to the establishment of a working group in early 2017 to examine and report on the tax treatment of landlords (or rental accommodation providers), and to put forward options, where appropriate, for amendments to such treatment. This working group was set up in January 2017, is chaired by the Department of Finance and its membership consists of officials from the Tax and Economics Divisions of the Department of Finance; the Revenue Commissioners; the Housing Division of my Department; and the Residential Tenancies Board.

A public consultation was conducted in March/April 2017 and the consultation paper asked ten targeted questions which covered subjects such as mortgage interest relief, capital repayment relief, rental accommodation as a pension investment, the deductibility of various expenses, Capital Gains Tax, long-term tenancies, accidental landlords, the Rent-a-Room Scheme

and vacant properties. The consultation received almost 70 written submissions from a wide range of interested parties, including individual landlords, representative bodies and charitable organisations.

It is expected that the report of the Working Group will be presented to the Minister for Finance by the end of this month, to allow for consideration as part of the deliberations for Budget 2018.

Departmental Strategies

484. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the progress which has been made in the setting up of the expert group in line with the commitment in action No. 12 of the strategy for the rental sector that his Department will lead an expert group to develop a cost rental model for the Irish rental sector; when he expects it to be established; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33467/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Strategy for the Rental Sector, published in December 2016, noted that the Programme for a Partnership Government contains a commitment to develop a “cost rental” option, taking account of work already completed in this area, including by the National Economic and Social Council and others.

In line with this commitment, Action 12 of the Strategy commits my Department to lead an expert group to develop a cost rental model for the Irish rental sector. This Group will address issues such as funding mechanisms, the need to grow the necessary institutional capacity, particularly within the AHB and not-for-profit sector (whether through mergers, new entrants or strategic partnerships), rent levels, the households to be targeted and the appropriate regulation mechanisms.

The Expert Group will assess the benefits that a larger and more developed not-for-profit segment would bring to the rental sector and the housing system, by increasing supply of rental accommodation for middle-income households and ensuring new capacity is developed and attracted into Ireland. The Expert Group will also consider various proposals, including the proposal to establish a semi-State company to progress the cost rental model, in the course of its work.

It is my intention to establish this Expert Group in the coming weeks and the development of a proposal regarding its membership and terms of reference is currently being prepared in my Department. As committed in the Rental Strategy, it is envisaged that the Expert Group will report initially before the end of the year.

Departmental Strategies

485. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government when he expects a completed document will be published in view of the fact that he has seen a first draft of the new national vacant housing re-use strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33468/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Pillar 5 of the Government’s Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is specifically focused on Utilising Existing Housing Stock, with a key objective of

ensuring that the existing vacant housing stock throughout the country and across all forms of tenure, in both the public and private sectors, is used to the optimum degree possible. In this regard, Action 5.1 of Rebuilding Ireland commits to the development of a National Vacant Housing Re-Use Strategy, informed by Census 2016 data.

To this end, the Housing Agency, established a working group comprising senior representatives from my Department, local authorities and from the Housing Agency itself to inform the Strategy. My Department has received the output from the work of this Group and is presently engaging with key Departments and Agencies to consider the analysis and agree on the recommended actions, prior to publication.

I would like to see as much ambition as possible in bringing as many viable vacant properties back into use at an early stage. I intend, as part of the review of Rebuilding Ireland, to explore what further actions can be taken and what new ideas we can bring to bear, in close liaison with Ministerial colleagues. If budgetary measures are needed to reinforce the ambition, this may delay the publication of the Strategy. But this will not delay the commencement of important work at local level in gathering more accurate and up-to-date information on where vacant properties are and who owns them, so that we can facilitate the re-use of many vacant properties, particularly in our cities and towns. I will be discussing this with local authority Chief Executives when I meet them next week.

Ahead of finalisation of the Strategy, it is important to note that my Department has already introduced a number of significant measures under Pillar 5 of Rebuilding Ireland to incentivise the increased use of vacant housing stock to help meet the needs of those in receipt of social housing assistance. These initiatives include the Repair and Leasing Scheme, the Buy and Renew Scheme, and the Housing Agency acquisitions fund.

My Department will continue to engage actively with local authorities, working together with AHBs, to maximise delivery from these schemes, particularly in relation to the Repair & Leasing Scheme referred to by the Deputy, and to progress the wider range of actions to be finalised as part of the broader Vacant House Re-use Strategy.

Electoral Reform

486. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the position regarding the work of his Department in extending voting rights to persons of 16 and 17 years of age further to his commitment given in Seanad Éireann during the debate on the Electoral (Amendment) (Voting at 16) Bill 2016 on 24 March 2017 that he would engage in further deliberation and discussion with interested parties and organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33509/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Electoral (Amendment) (Voting at 16) Bill 2016 provides for amendments to sections 9 and 10 of the Electoral Act 1992 in order to reduce, to sixteen years, the age at which a person would be entitled to register to vote at local and European elections.

The issues that arise in considering a reduction in the voting age more generally, and not just for local and European elections, are being examined in my Department. Matters for consideration include the potential concerns that arise in having the age of majority set at 18 years and the voting age set at 16.

Question No. 487 answered with Question No. 473.

Wind Energy Guidelines

488. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government further to the publication of the draft guidelines on wind energy, the process which will bring these guidelines into law; if there will be a public consultation process in place; and the way in which it will affect various counties that have adopted policies in their own county development plans which is contrary to these draft proposals. [29588/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My predecessor as Minister, in conjunction with my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, recently announced a “preferred draft approach” to the review of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines. A copy of the announcement is available on my Department’s website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/guidelines/wind-energy/coveney-and-naughten-announce-key-development-review-wind-energy-development-guidelines> .

The “preferred draft approach” has been developed to address a number of key aspects of the targeted review which include: Sound / Noise, Visual Amenity Setback Distances, Shadow Flicker, Community Obligation, Community Dividend and Grid Connections.

As part of the overall review, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) will be undertaken on the “proposed draft approach” to the revised Guidelines before they come into effect. This is in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2001/24/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, the SEA Directive. SEA is a process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes which act as frameworks for development consent, prior to their final adoption, with public consultation as part of that process.

It is envisaged that the SEA process will take approximately 9 months. In light of the SEA requirements, it is expected that the Guidelines will be finalised and come into effect in Q1 2018. In the meantime, the current Guidelines remain in force.

When finalised, the revised Guidelines will be issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities, and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála must have regard to guidelines issued under section 28 in the performance of their functions generally under the Planning Acts. In addition, following an amendment to the Planning Acts in 2015, section 28 guidelines may also contain “specific planning policy requirements” that are required to be applied by planning authorities and the Board in the performance of their functions.

Therefore, it is open to me generally, as Minister, to issue guidelines which are advisory in nature and which may also contain mandatory requirements. As such, local authorities could be required to review and amend policies in their county development plans which are contrary to specified requirements in such statutory guidelines.

However, in the context of the review of the 2006 Guidelines, and without prejudicing the SEA process referred to above, it should be noted that any such proposals will be detailed in draft Guidelines which will be published later this year for public consultation, as part of the SEA process, prior to their finalisation and adoption.

Programme for Government Implementation

489. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the status of the commitments in the programme for Government on improving the lives of persons with disabilities. [29820/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Programme for a Partnership Government sets out the Government's commitment to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are incorporated into all future housing policies. While addressing the needs of people with disabilities is already well established in housing policies, the commitment in the Government Programme provides a platform to consolidate and build on the significant work to date and ensure that momentum is sustained in future housing policy development.

The National Housing Strategy for people with a Disability (NHSPWD) 2011-2016 and associated National Implementation Framework were jointly published by my Department and the Department of Health. They set out the Government's broad framework for the delivery of housing for people with disabilities and were developed as part of a coherent framework in conjunction with the Government's mental health policy and congregated settings report. Building on the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment to meet the housing needs of people with disabilities, the NHSPWD has been extended to 2020 to continue to deliver on its aims.

Implementation of identified actions in the NHSPWD is being driven primarily by the Housing Agency by means of a dedicated sub-group comprising representatives from my Department, the Health Service Executive (HSE), Department of Health, local authorities, the Irish Council for Social Housing and various disability representative organisations. The Housing subgroup, established in 2012, is progressing a range of priority actions and will continue to progress this work under the extended timeframe. An Implementation Monitoring Group (IMG) was established in 2012 to monitor and report on progress, and has met on ten occasions since then with a further meeting scheduled for October. Three progress reports on implementation covering the period September 2012 to December 2016, have been published by the IMG to date. These comprehensive reports are available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/policy/people-disability/housing-people-disability>.

One of the key measures achieved in 2016 under the NHSPWD was the establishment of Housing and Disability Steering Groups (HDSGs) in all housing authorities, to achieve a co-ordinated and integrated approach to meeting the housing needs of people with a disability at local level. These are chaired by Directors of Housing in each authority and include HSE and disability representative organisations. Each HDSG has prepared a local Strategic Plan for its own City/County area, to develop specific local strategies to meet identified and emerging need over the next five years. These Plans, along with the annual Summary of Social Housing Assessments, will allow local authorities to plan more strategically for the housing needs of people with a disability and will support the delivery of accommodation using all appropriate housing supply mechanisms. This is a more targeted and responsive way to meet actual need identified rather than, for example, designating a specific number of new social housing builds that are fully wheelchair accessible.

My Department provides funding under three separate schemes for necessary adaptations, repairs or improvement works to the houses of people with disabilities and older people in order to make their accommodation more suitable for their needs, and to facilitate the continued occupancy of their own home for as long as possible. There is a strong social benefit accruing from this funding in terms of supporting older people, and people with a disability, to continue

to live independently in their own homes and, in some cases, to avoid an outcome where people may otherwise require social housing. In 2016, funding totalled €56.25m and 8,010 households benefitted from the grants. In 2017, €59.8m is available under this scheme and the target is to reach 10,000 homes.

In addition to funding for adaptation works to existing dwellings, my Department's Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) funds up to 100% of project costs advanced by local authorities to Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) to provide accommodation for people with specific categories of need, including people with disabilities. A provision of €66 million is available for the scheme this year.

Public Sector Pensions

490. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to examine increasing the Army service pension; the last time that an increase was applied; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33232/17]

501. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to increase the Army service pension; and the last time an increase was applied. [33230/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 490 and 501 together.

The last occasion that public service pensions, including Defence Forces pensions, were increased was on 1st September 2008. Up until then, Defence Forces pensions were generally increased in line with, and from the same operative date as, relevant pay increases applied to serving military personnel. Such public service pension increases normally required the prior approval of the Minister for Finance/Public Expenditure and Reform. Since then, no increase in military pension rates has been authorised as there were no relevant pay increases for serving PDF personnel during that period. The same situation has applied across the public service. Instead, the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Acts 2009 – 2013 reduced public service pay and pension rates.

I would refer the Deputy to the reply from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to Question numbers 373 and 378 on 20 June 2017 on the question of public service pension increases.

In his reply, the Minister said that in the past, the occupational pensions of public service pensioners were generally adjusted in line with changes in the wages or salary of the pensioner's grade at retirement. Sometimes referred to as "pay parity", this non-statutory linkage lapsed in 2010, when the values of pensions in payment were left unchanged notwithstanding salary cuts at the beginning of 2010 which affected all public servants under the financial emergency legislation.

Due to a grace period associated with the 2010 salary cuts, public servants who retired in the 26 months following those cuts, that is, in the period up to end-February 2012, had their pensions based on the higher 'pre-cut' salary levels. This has led to the current situation whereby post February-2012 retirees, on a like-for-like basis, mostly receive lower pensions than their earlier-retired counterparts.

In addition, since the beginning of 2011 a progressively structured "Public Service Pension Reduction" (PSPR) has decreased the rates of public service pensions above specified thresholds. A significant part-reversal or unwinding of PSPR is under way as set out in the Financial

Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2015.

The Minister in his reply on 20 June 2017 went on to say that the lapsing of pay parity along with the pension differential arising between pre and post-2012 retirees, have created the conditions under which – as we move beyond “FEMPI” legislation and the progressive removal of the Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR) towards more normal pay and pension setting conditions in the public service – the issue of how to adjust the post-award value of public service pensions, through appropriate pay or other linkages has required consideration.

In this context, the Minister referred to Section 6.2 of the proposed Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 – published last month – which indicates that over the duration of that agreement if ratified, policy on public service pensions in payment will be guided by the following three elements:

First, the need to adopt an equitable approach to the various public service pensioner cohorts differentiated by date of retirement (in particular pre and post end-February 2012) is affirmed.

Second, for those who retired or will retire after end-February 2012, to the extent that they retired on reduced salaries for pension award purposes, they will receive pension increases in line with pay increases received by their peers currently in employment, in accordance with the terms of the collective agreement.

Third, when alignment is achieved between pre and post end-February 2012 pensioners, as will happen progressively for salary ranges up to €70,000 in 2020 under the proposed collective agreement, pay increases will continue to benefit pensions in payment for the duration of the agreement.

Finally, as regards the progressive removal of the Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR) from pensions in payment, this is happening in three stages over the period 2016 to 2018. When complete on 1 January 2018, it will mean that most public service pensioners are not affected by PSPR. I understand that by virtue of the 2016/2017 changes, about 90% of military pensioners are not impacted by the PSPR at all.

Defence Forces Personnel Data

491. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the details of figures for the strength of the Permanent Defence Force with regard to all three services and all ranks; the gender breakdown of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33128/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Government is committed to maintaining the stabilised strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel, comprising of 7,520 Army, 886 Air Corps and 1,094 Naval Service as stated in the 2015 White Paper on Defence. I am advised by the Military Authorities that the strength of the Permanent Defence Force, at 31 May 2017, the latest date for which details are available, was 9,044. The following tables indicate the strength of the Permanent Defence Force as of 31 May 2017 across all three services and ranks, broken down by gender. The figures provided are for whole time equivalent posts. With the support of the Chief of Staff and within the resources available, it is intended to retain the capacity of the Defence Forces to operate effectively across all roles and to undertake the tasks laid down by Government both at home and overseas.

Army

Rank	Male	Female	Total
Lieutenant General	1	0	1
Major General	2	0	2
Brigadier General	6	0	6
Colonel	34	1	35
Lieutenant Colonel	99	2	101
Commandant	222	33	255
Captain	211	43	254
Lieutenant	129	17	146
Sergeant Major	26	0	26
Battalion Quarter- master Sergeant	28	0	28
Company Sergeant	88	1	89
Company Quarter- master Sergeant	148	2	150
Sergeant	770	54	824
Corporal	1,228	112	1,340
Private	3,721	198	3,919
Cadets	65	13	78
Total	6,778	476	7,254

Air Corps

Rank	Male	Female	Total
Brigadier General	1	0	1
Colonel	2	0	2
Lieutenant Colonel	11	0	11
Commandant	32	2	34
Captain	46	6	52
Lieutenant	21	0	21
Sergeant Major	6	1	7
Battalion Quarter- master Sergeant	4	0	4
Company Sergeant	52	0	52
Company Quarter- master Sergeant	10	1	11
Sergeant	99	6	105
Corporal	142	9	151
Private	216	8	224
Cadets	27	1	28
Total	669	34	703

Naval Service

Rank	Male	Female	Total
Brigadier General	1	0	1
Colonel	2	0	2
Lieutenant Colonel	13	0	13

Rank	Male	Female	Total
Commandant	43	8	51
Captain	39	13	52
Lieutenant	33	2	35
Sergeant Major	6	0	6
Battalion Quarter-master Sergeant	6	0	6
Company Sergeant	66	0	66
Company Quarter-master Sergeant	13	0	13
Sergeant	161	7	168
Corporal	122	8	130
Private	497	25	522
Cadets	20	2	22
Total	1,022	65	1,087

Defence Forces Reserve Strength

492. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the strength of the Reserve Defence Forces with regard to all three services and all ranks; the gender breakdown of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33129/17]

494. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of additional recruits the Reserve Defence Forces have taken on to date in 2017 with regard to all services; the gender breakdown of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33131/17]

496. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of days spent at sea by members of the Naval Service Reserve in 2016 and to date in 2017. [33133/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 492, 494 and 496 together.

As of 31 May, 2017 (the latest date for which figures are available), the effective strength of the Army Reserve and Naval Reserve was 1,941 personnel. The following table sets out the details requested by the Deputy:

Army Reserve (effective strength)

Rank	Male	Female	Total
Lt. Colonel	5	0	5
Commandant	49	2	51
Captain	40	1	41
Lieutenant	160	30	190
Sergeant Major	2	0	2
Battalion Quarter Master Sergeant	5	0	5
Company Sergeant	45	0	45

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Rank	Male	Female	Total
Company Quarter Master Sergeant	56	2	58
Sergeant	238	19	257
Corporal	279	68	347
Private	693	125	818
Total	1,572	247	1,819

Naval Service Reserve (effective strength)

Rank	Male	Female	Total
Lt. Colonel	0	0	0
Commandant	4	0	4
Captain	5	0	5
Lieutenant	6	1	7
Sergeant Major	0	0	0
Battalion Quarter Master Sergeant	1	0	1
Company Sergeant	6	0	6
Company Quarter Master Sergeant	0	0	0
Sergeant	10	0	10
Corporal	17	5	22
Private	53	14	67
Total	102	20	122

I am informed by the military authorities that as of 10th July 2017, there have been 90 new inductions into the RDF, with 8 of these being female as follows:

- 76 (7 female) Army Reserve and
- 14 (1 female) Naval Service Reserve.

With regard to the First Line Reserve and number of days spent at sea by members of the Naval Service Reserve in 2016 and 2017, the military authorities are currently collating this data and I will provide it to the Deputy when it is available.

The next RDF General Service Recruitment campaigns for both the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve will begin in late July 2017. The campaigns will run for several weeks post Leaving Certificate with a view to inducting successful applicants at Easter and in Summer 2018 for camp participation. I remain committed to increasing recruitment to both the PDF and RDF. In the context of both finite resources and personnel, it is necessary to strike an appropriate balance in terms of PDF and RDF recruitment, so as to deliver the desired effects of maintaining the capacity of the Defence Forces to undertake all roles assigned to it by Government.

Defence Forces Recruitment

493. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of additional recruits the Permanent Defence Force has taken on to date in 2017 with regard to all three services; the gender breakdown of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33130/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I am advised by the Military Authorities that a number of recruitment competitions for entry in to the Permanent Defence Force are currently underway. They include the 2017 Cadet Competition and the General Service Recruitment Campaign .

Recruitment up to 10 July 2017 totals 250 personnel. Details are set out in the following table:

	General Service Recruits Army	General Service Recruits Navy	Air Corps Apprentices	Direct Entry Naval Service Officers	Military Medicine	Totals
Male	179	27	11	8	1	226
Female	21	2	0	0	1	24
Total	200	29	11	8	2	250

With the support of the Chief of Staff, it is intended to continue to recruit new personnel in order to ensure that the Defence Forces retain the capacity to operate effectively across all roles and to undertake the tasks laid down by Government, both at home and overseas.

Question No. 494 answered with Question No. 492.

Army Bomb Disposals Data

495. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of suspect devices that the Army disposal unit dealt has dealt with by county to date in 2017, in tabular form. [33132/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána have primary responsibility for the internal security of the State. Among the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence is the provision of Aid to the Civil Power which, in practice, means to assist An Garda Síochána when requested to do so. The Defence Forces Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams respond when a request for assistance is made by An Garda Síochána in dealing with a suspect device. The number of EOD callouts, which include viable devices, hoaxes, false alarms, post-blast analysis and the removal of unstable chemicals in laboratories dealt with up to date in 2017, by county, are set out in the following table:

County	Number of EOD Callouts
Clare	1
Cork	2
Donegal	3
Dublin	23
Kildare	6
Laois	3
Limerick	3
Mayo	1
Monaghan	1
Offaly	1

County	Number of EOD Callouts
Roscommon	1
Sligo	1
Tipperary	1
Westmeath	3
TOTAL	50

Question No. 496 answered with Question No. 492.

EU Funding

497. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he has identified suitable capability projects for the European Defence Fund and for the European Defence Industrial Development Programme; and if he will be proposing options for the joint procurement initiatives within the European Defence Fund as the European Council has requested member states to do. [33134/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The European Commission published a number of documents on 7 June 2017. These included a communication proposing the establishment of a European Defence Fund and a proposal for a Regulation to establish a European Defence Industrial Development Programme (DIDP). The purpose of the Defence Fund is to promote research and innovation and contribute to the strengthening of the European Defence technology and industrial base, and to further stimulate the development of key defence capabilities.

The Fund proposes to coordinate, supplement and amplify national investments in defence by pooling resources individual Member States can achieve greater output and develop defence technology and equipment that may not be feasible on their own. The Fund will also foster innovation and allow economies of scale thus reinforcing the competitiveness of the EU defence industry.

The Fund has two strands with different legal and funding structures (or “windows”) which are complementary and are being gradually deployed:

Under the Research Window, the EU will offer direct funding (grants) for research in innovative defence products and technologies, fully financed from the EU budget.

Under the Capability Window, Member States will pool financial contributions to jointly develop and acquire key defence capabilities. The EU will offer co-financing from the EU budget on the Development phase through the proposed European Defence Industrial Development Programme. The EU will also support member states’ collaborative efforts in helping them deploy the most suitable financial arrangements for joint acquisition with a view to incentivise cooperation and leverage national financing

On 22 June 2017 the European Council called for a number of actions in relation to the Defence Fund and DIDP, the first of which is for agreement on the DIDP proposal. A Friends of the Presidency Group has been established by the Estonian Presidency of the EU which will be the initial working group format through which the proposal will be considered by Member States. It is intended at this early stage, to have the proposal adopted by the first quarter of 2018, and to have the first spend under the Programme in 2019. It would be premature to begin identifying capability projects before negotiations on the draft Regulation has commenced.

Ireland has participated in a number of capability development projects with other Member States through the European Defence Agency. The primary reason for Ireland's participation in the European Defence Agency since its establishment in 2004, is to support the development of Defence Forces capabilities for peacekeeping and international crisis management operations.

Ireland also participates in a collaborative database known as CODABA which is managed by the European Defence Agency. This database provides a platform for engaging with other Member States on a number of fronts including collaborative and/or joint procurement.

European Defence Agency

498. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the criteria or commitments he deems appropriate for Ireland to make within Permanent Structured Co-operation; and if it is planned that Ireland will participate fully within this new structure. [33135/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The PESCO criteria set out in Articles 1 and 2 of Protocol 10 annexed to the Lisbon Treaty, outlines the general guidance on participation in PESCO. Member States have to be both willing and able to contribute forces to the EU, participate in equipment programmes and European Defence Agency (EDA) activities, participate in EU Battlegroups, invest in defence equipment, improve interoperability and enhance their military capabilities. Ireland can support the development of an inclusive PESCO which delivers, through modular streams, essential capabilities for Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operations in the area of international crisis management. An agreed governance structure, the types of collaborative projects and initiatives Member States are willing to commit to, and a clear rationale as to the requirement for these to be addressed through PESCO, needs to be firstly determined before PESCO can be formally established. Member States, supported by the EDA and EEAS are continuing to work together in order to consider and develop a shared understanding of the common commitments, goals and criteria on the basis of the relevant provisions of the Treaty, as well as the governance model.

Further meetings are scheduled to take place later in July and August to develop this further and where it is hoped that the common criteria and conditions for participation can be further elaborated and defined. In that regard it is too early at this juncture to give a definite indication as to whether Ireland will participate in PESCO or to make any commitments in that regard. However, Ireland's objective is to remain at the centre of CSDP and EDA projects and we will be seeking to see PESCO develop in a way that enables Ireland to participate, if not in the first stream, then at a future date.

Foreshore Licence Applications

499. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the details of the research and investigations undertaken which led to the observation submitted by his Department in its role as a named external consultee advising the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government on a foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33189/17]

500. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he is satisfied regarding the submitted observation on a foreshore lease planning application (details supplied) on Galway Bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33190/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take

Questions Nos. 499 and 500 together.

In March 2016 my Department was advised by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government that they had received a foreshore lease application from the Marine Institute for the testing of prototype wind, wave and tidal energy devices at the Galway Bay Marine and Renewable Energy Test Site. My Department's views on the application were requested.

The following observations were submitted to the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government:

“In all locations where wind turbines are permitted it should be a condition that they meet the following lighting requirements:

1. Single turbines or turbines delineating corners of a wind farm should be illuminated by high intensity obstacle lights.

2. Obstruction lighting elsewhere in a wind farm will be of a pattern that will allow the hazard be identified and avoided by aircraft in flight.

3. Obstruction lights used should be incandescent or of a type visible to Night Vision Equipment. Obstruction lighting fitted to obstacles must emit light at the near Infra-Red (IR) range of electromagnetic spectrum specifically at or near 850 nanometres (nm) of wavelength. Light intensity to be of similar value to that emitted in the visible spectrum.”.

In April 2016 the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government advised that a revised application had been submitted by the Marine Institute. On foot of further consultations, the above observations remained unchanged.

Question No. 500 answered with Question No. 499.

Question No. 501 answered with Question No. 490.

Defence Forces Medicinal Products

502. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of persons to whom Doxycycline was prescribed in each of the years 2006 to 2012 respectively. [33239/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I have been advised by the Military Authorities that to collate the figures requested by the Deputy would require a Medical Officer(s) to examine the medical files of all Defence Forces personnel that travelled to malaria prone areas within the period of time specified.

Due to the scope of the request and the demands it would place on already limited resources, I regret that it is not possible to provide the information requested by the Deputy.

Brexit Documents

503. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the position regarding the development of sectorial response plans to Brexit; the publication date of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33336/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The outcome of the vote of 23 June 2016 in the UK leading to the triggering of Article 50 by the UK in March 2017 does not give rise to fundamental strategic issues for Defence Forces operations or for Ireland's continuing engagement in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). That said, given the significant role the UK has played in relation to the evolution of CSDP, it is likely that Brexit will have some impact on future developments in the Defence sphere at EU level. Until however the UK has indicated what kind of relationship it will seek with the EU in the CSDP area and negotiations have been finalised, it is impossible at this juncture to predict future possible outcomes in this regard.

At Department level, structures that have been put in place to address the potential challenges arising from Brexit include the assignment of responsibility to a senior official at Assistant Secretary General level in relation to Brexit related matters. The senior official is leading the Department's input to deliberations within the framework established across Government and is supported in that role by a number of branches in the Department. The senior official represents the Department on the Interdepartmental Group on EU-UK Affairs which is chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and is engaged with the identification of key strategic, operational and policy issues arising from Brexit. In addition, the Management Board is acting as a clearing house for Brexit and maintains oversight on an ongoing basis.

The Deputy will be aware that the Government has adopted a contingency framework to deal with all issues arising in respect of the UK vote to leave the EU. Accordingly, any issues arising, including those within the Defence area, whether bilateral, or in respect of developments in CSDP, or regarding our wider international multilateral defence engagements, will be also addressed within that framework. Following on from publication of the document setting out the Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations, work is underway across departments to prepare adaptive Sectorial Brexit Response Plans to mitigate emerging sectorial challenges. These plans will build on ongoing cross-Government research, analysis and consultations with stakeholders, and will encompass the following themes:

- Sustainable fiscal policies to ensure capacity to absorb and respond to economic shocks, not least from Brexit;
- Policies to make Irish enterprise more diverse and resilient, to diversify trade and investment patterns, and to strengthen competitiveness;
- Prioritising policy measures and dedicating resources to protect jobs and businesses in the sectors and regions most affected by Brexit;
- Realising economic opportunities arising from Brexit, and helping businesses adjust to any new logistical or trade barriers arising;
- Making a strong case at EU level that Ireland will require support that recognises where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy.

Having regard to the bi-lateral arrangements already in place, and the fact Brexit does not give rise to fundamental strategic issues for Defence Forces operations or for Ireland's continuing engagement in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), it is not considered that a specific sectorial response plan in the Defence sphere is necessary at this time. Such a requirement will be kept under constant review and all potential consequences in the defence sphere, arising during these negotiations, will remain the subject of ongoing consideration by my Department throughout this process. The Government is under no illusions about the complexity of these negotiations. In that regard, I wish to reassure the Deputy that my Department is monitoring the ongoing situation to ensure that the Department and the Defence Forces are

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well prepared to address any potential issues arising in the defence area on foot of Brexit.